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Thesis

WILLA CATHER'S RETREAT FROM REALITY:

An Historical Treatment of Her Novels Showing the Development of Her Essential Asceticism

by

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(A.B., Bates College, 1922)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1934

52061

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INTRODUCTION

So that there may be a better understanding of the purport of this thesis we offer, in the introduction, a brief discussion of several of the newer terms used in modern literary criticism. These terms are not easy to explain for they are so recent that they are not to be found in books on literary criticism.

1.

Realism

First, we will speak of modern realism which made its appearance in literary criticism when the middle class became powerful. In its simplest terms realism is a permanent interest in life itself; and a writer who possesses such an interest is a realist. This realist is the eye of the people; yes, he is more than that for he must not only see, but he must also simplify and interpret life to his readers. As he conceals nothing, he allows himself to be in complete sympathy with his characters, noting not only their virtues and vices, but also their passions and stupidities. He concerns himself chiefly with the external life of his characters. At the present time the would-be-famous and the get-rich-quick realists are adopting all sorts of crude devices of style, method, and content so that the public will want their books. But the true realists such as Elizabeth Roberts, Christopher Morley, James

Branch Cabell and others are proving by their novels that an artistic realism is possible.

a.

Vitalism (2)

Not all realists possess the same amount of vitalism; some are more or less vital than are others, but every true realist must be a vitalist to a certain degree. John Erskine, who is one of our outstanding vital realists, has given one of the best explanations of vitalism we know through the conversation and reflections of Helen of Troy. So we will accept and repeat the explanation of vitalism which is to be found in the novel "The Private Life of Helen of Troy." Helen has a great deal to say about love and love of life. She regrets that Menelaos' attitude to her has not been that of a passionate lover but then she says

> "Love is something that happens to us, we can't help ourselves, and the real passion isn't a compliment or a gift, and it isn't a sign of generosity in the lover.-----I wanted Hermione to know the real thing! To have the passion and the heart-ache when she is young, when her body and her mind are undulled, when the ecstasy is in the senses and yet seems to be in the soul! And then, when the body flags and grows old, to find the ecstasy indeed in the spirit after all, their two souls melted in that fiery happiness." (1)

But Helen did not believe that love of life happened as did love, she considered it an art to be learned only by long practice; thus young people lack it and are afraid of life. Once these young people become middle aged they lose their fear of life and are so relieved that they just settle down and never

(1) 2, p. 71
(2) See pp. 71-76, 89-94

human beings and attempts the problem of their novels based on scientific analysis is possible.

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Vitalism

But all realists assume the more humble of attempting some sort more or less vital than the others, and every time reality must be a vitalist to a morbid degree. Such a feeling, who is one of our outstanding vital realists, has given one of the best illustrations of vitalism as much dominant the commentator has multiplied to degree of [illegible]. So we all should not regard the manifestation of vitalism which is so to found in the novel 'The Fatalist Life of Anton of Ivy.' Demonstrate a power cost to our master love the loss of life. The reason that Dmitrieff's existence is due to the [illegible] that of a [illegible] lover who lives [illegible]:

> "There is something that suggests to me, as much this morning, that the real Dmitrieff lived a complicated or a pity. And it still is a sign of generosity in the lover.------ Anton Dmitrieff to come the real [illegible]! In love the passion and the [illegible] the is young. Then our [illegible] and the real [illegible] also the [illegible] in the [illegible] to be in the world! [illegible] there [illegible] life. In fact the passion lasted in the spirit [illegible] all. Which [illegible] Dmitrieff [illegible]."(1)

Now Tolen did not [illegible] that love a life [illegible] to old love. She confessed it is not to be learned only by long [illegible] that even young people lost it and [illegible] of life. Some young people become [illegible] when they [illegible] life and are so [illegible] that they just [illegible] down and [illegible]

(1) [illegible]
(2) [illegible]

really know what it is to love life. Helen herself loved life and so wanted to know life, but as a girl her extreme beauty prevented her from being punished when she did wrong; so Helen felt that she had missed much of life and resented it. None of her youthful mistakes brought her harm; and instead of finding reality in her marriage to Menelaos she only found immunity to life because of his sheltering protection. After being brought back to Sparta by Menelaos Helen said this to her daughter.

> "Without sharp edges, life is a smooth habit, and meaningless. I gave myself to Paris because I loved him, but somewhere in my thoughts was the hope that our love would actually be the great tragedy it seemed to promise, and that in the end I should suffer and feel. But my days in Troy might have been so many seconds in a dream; no one took me seriously.----When the end came, I said to myself I shall live at last, for Menelaos will surely kill me. Your father will never know what was in my mind as I saw the anger go out of his face and that sheltering look come back into it. It isn't exactly that he has forgiven me, but I am not counted in the same world with other people--- I'm a sort of wraith." (1)

So Helen was destined never to actually know real life. But she did make this formula for living: strict honesty with herself and complete frankness about herself with other people. Living in this way Helen felt that she came as near as she could to knowing life. To Helen respectability was dangerous for it meant not being moral but being afraid of life. From Helen's philosophy of life we discover that the vitalist is one who asserts the right of the individual to live his own life with the determination not to pay too high for mere existence. He is sincere, frank, earnest, passionate and not ashamed to

(1) 2, pp. 140-1

love beauty. He must have an aversion to unreality. To see all the possibilities of living and to experience them if possible is the vitalist's duty. The vitalist realizes that nothing is stable unless he is himself and he does not attempt to justify his life or the lives of others for lives should speak for themselves.

b.

American and English Realism Contrasted

In every civilized country we find realism at the present time; but in no two countries is realism exactly the same. We will speak only of American and English realism in this paper. Both American and English realism admit that man has a soul; for the realist, whether he be American or English, has had glimpses of the soul in its struggle with the flesh. At times the realist points out the weakness of the flesh in yielding to temptation; and at other times he exults in the triumph of the mind over the flesh. The realists realize that the denizens of the public houses have in them the divine spark just as truly as do the aristocrats.

A note of optimism characterized early American realism; Carl Van Doren says that the origin of the United States of America in a successful revolution and the confidence of the people that its future is assured gave rise to this optimism. James Fennimore Cooper was our first realist of note but Nathaniel Hawthorne who lived somewhat later surpassed him as an artistic realist. During the last of the "Gay Nineties"

have beauty. We must have an emotion or sensibility. We are the possibilities of living are so numerous that if poetry is the absolutely true. The statement implies that nothing is whole unless it is complete and we have our element in reality his life or the life of others for life's sake would seem too sentimental.

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Western and English Realism Compared

A study established somewhat on that question of the general idea is to be the innovator in creating beauty for some. We will always deal of western and English realism in this paper. With Americans and English readers would find one has a book for the reality, whether be a western or English, can be children of his most in his character with the first. In fact the realist writer and has endeavors to the first to realizing to theoretical and to other place be return in the interest of the world over the first. The realistic reality and the conditions of the public under. Here is that the writer speak that or their as to his interest.

A note of realism characterizes early American realism that was common. It was that the values of the United States of America in a democratic revolution and the conditions of the people that the future is address gave rise to this tendency. These tendencies center the our first reality of very and material treatment and lived experiment life. Everyone has to be reality reality. During the 19th of the "the reality"

American realism was most typical for then such writers as Stephen Crane were exposing truth that had been suppressed. At that time a note of pessimism began to creep into our realism, for the realist was ready to admit that democracy in the United States of America had not been entirely successful and he believed that while optimism at its best is a virtue it is at its worst a vice. Yet the pessimism of the American realist has never been like that of the Asiatic or European realist who has reached a point of ultimate despair; the American realist is certain that his revelation of the truth will lead to reformation. "Exhibit the truth, the American realist believes, and something salutary will be the consequence, as day follows dawn." (1) The art of living and the art of love with all their endless variations supply the realist with his material, for he knows that to them the average human being gives most of his time. Although the American attitude toward life and love is less complicated than it is elsewhere the realist is able to find cases where the course of the power of love is not simple and instances where life is very complicated. The American realist holds himself aloof from his book to a certain degree, but yet he reflects in his writing the type of society in which he lives. Theodore Dreiser with his documentary detail endeavors to give a realistic picture of sex life in America; Robert Herrick and Sherwood Anderson attempt somewhat the same thing but in a different style. Dorothy Canfield brings home life and the worth of the individual into her novels. And

(1) M, p. 108

Zona Gale is interested in frustrated personalities. And so we might go on naming other realists and their particular interests, for there are many.

English realism differs from American realism in many ways. In the first place it regards life not as an end in itself but as a means of acquiring appreciation of that ulterior significance which lies behind it. Hence the English realist is concerned not only with the representation of real life but with its interpretation; he becomes a moralizer, a reformer and a teacher. He does his best to make himself a part of his scene and to talk directly to his readers; in George Eliot's novels, which are full of moral interpolations, we find proof of this. Biography gives the English realist a great deal of material for his writing and the biographic realistic novel made popular by Daniel Defoe is still a part of the English tradition. Reliance on external proof and authority rather than on internal proof and art characterized the earlier English realism and does to a certain extent today. At the present time impressionism and symbolism are taking the place of enumeration and detail; and psychological analysis is finding its place in the English realistic novel. Real life, as portrayed in novels, is being tested as it aids in the growth of human character. This new realism may be called the realism of the emotions.

2.

Psychorealism (2)

We agree with Zona Gale as she says that realism does not deal with enough, for it is but the objective record of truth and so fails in dealing with inner living. (1) Psycho-naturalism does not satisfy the truly intelligent reader because it is an attempt to record the whole unclarified stream of consciousness. Therefore we will not supplement realism with psycho-naturalism but with psychorealism which is subjective or introspective realism. The author who is consciously or unconsciously a psychorealist makes his characters three dimensional, rather than two dimensional. These characters have an inner life which only they themselves can reveal to the reader. Characters in real life or in fiction should not, if they are to live a well balanced life, indulge too frequently in introspection; neither should they live over much in the realm of ideas. They should receive, at least, a part of their education through sense stimuli for only by making themselves sense-exact will their thoughts be more precise. Zona Gale thus describes the realist and the creative writer who interprets to us Psyche; the latter is really our psychorealist:

> "In a word your realist is a wizard at describing grub and cocoon, but the creative writer interprets to you Psyche, the butterfly. To be sure all these are facts--grub fact, cocoon fact, fact of wings. I grant the grub, I grant the cocoon, but I insist that the one who writes about them see more than these. From the one who essays to write about larvae, I expect

(1) K, p.122
(2) See pp. 44-8; 64, "Professor's House"; 68-130; 119-30; 162-79

> that clairvoyance, the clairaudience which, in our rich phrase 'enters into things'literally enters into, writes in the actual beat and shine of things. I expect the creative writer to see more relationship, more direction, more significance than another can see. I expect him to penetrate ever farther and farther into the materials of creation, into the consciousness, the awareness, the self-awareness of the creatures. To watch and point to and reveal and sensitize all the innumerable facets of consciousness and its manifestation in behavior and relationship and reaction and routine. There is a field swimming in light, in color, with surprise and exigency and rich variation, and infinite personality.----There are only two kinds of writing; that which records external aspects of persons and events, and that which, while recording the external, constantly seeks to record or to indicate the inner reaction, the inner effect, the inner path--the spirit. For me fiction must seek to record that inner living, and must do so in a style of beauty and distinction--and sometimes in a current of emotion--or else it cannot hold me for one chapter." (1)

Now we will repeat in a few words what we have already said, and define psychorealism as the painstaking revealment of the relatively significant degree of effect produced subjectively upon character.

We believe that there are four kinds of psychorealism. They are impressionism, psychorealism as a pattern of elements, psychorealism as an artistic purpose, and psychorealism of style and method. In her novels Cather makes use of the first three of these kinds.

Impressionism is a form of psychorealism which grows out of the desire of the author to make a psychological impression on the reader. It may be called functional psychorealism. The scene is presented by suggestion rather than by enumeration.

(1) K. pp. 123-4

Willa Cather herself speaks of impressionism as creative art in her essay "The Novel Demeuble".

> "Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there--that, it seems to me, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the over tone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama as well as to poetry itself." (1)

Zona Gale expresses somewhat the same thought in these words.

> "To extract from all things their significance is the process, if one likes the word, of art--the process of fiction writing." (2)

Another form of psychorealism is psychorealism as a pattern of elements. Here the author selects only such characters, episodes and attitudes as have psychological significance in relation to the theme. Closely allied to this form is psychorealism as an artistic purpose, in which the theme is either centered around showing the way the mind changes under the stress of circumstances, or the subconscious personality. No longer are the characters of an artistically written novel analyzed and described every few pages. As Zona Gale says the molecules of the novel are just the same as they used to be, the difference is in the arrangement; the old arrangement resulted in density, the new in a diamond.

> "We may not like the new reality or we may, but the point is that by this rearrangement of old materials, we have broken through to see more Man, more Woman, more Animal, more Thing--more Life. It was always there, but we have rearranged it, have caused it to leap out at us in a new guise--like a diamond in the coalbin. These new valuations of the familiar come to everyone in daily living. Edward Carpenter asks;'Who is there so unfortunate as not to have had

(1) F, p. 6
(2) K, p. 121

> the experience in ordinary daily life, of seeing some features, perhaps those of a well-known person suddenly transformed, with the strangest possible sense of transcendent Presence?' It is from such moments that the artist, in plastic art, in fiction, and in music, is giving us new arrangements of old familiars in new guises as different, surely, as the allotrope of water, whatever that allotrope may prove to be, will be from water itself." (1)

In fact the novel has become the artistic vehicle of thought, which the novels of Willa Cather so beautifully illustrate, by the process of selection and not by enlargement.

We will speak of one more form of psychorealism although we do not find it in the moods of Cather. This is psychorealism of style and method in which the diction and style is such as the subconscious mind half-formulates. The speeches of the characters frequently resemble day-dreams or reveries, the statements are incomplete often changing into other statements. In the novels of Sherwood Anderson we find marked examples of this. And in Zona Gale's novels we find it present but to a less degree.

3.

Idealism (2)

Idealism is usually considered as the direct opposite of realism. In fact in "The Winston Simplified Dictionary," 1927, idealism is defined as the attempt to depict perfection as the mind conceives it, rather than fact as observed. But in this our explanation of idealism we would say that idealism is a desire, expressed in writing, to make life better than it is.

(1) I, p. 289 (2) See pp. 134-38

Thus, the novelist who would be an idealist must first be a realist with a full artistic appreciation of life. He must be able to evaluate the different things of life, to see that some are good while others are bad and that some are pleasing while yet others are disagreeable and horrible. And in his novels he may express his dissatisfaction with those present day conditions, which he has decided are bad, either by constructive satire or by simple portrayal of conditions to him ideal. The idealist must, like a sensitive instrument, possess the power of appreciating the various degrees of attraction and repulsion, pleasure and pain.

4.

Asceticism (1)

Surely in literature asceticism is the direct opposite of realism for it emphasizes unreality and the life-to-come rather than reality and the present life. And so the ascetic attempts to subdue the flesh in order that he may be assured of happiness in the future life. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a certain form of asceticism was known as Puritanism. The Puritan pointed out the great damage done the human race by man's appreciation of the joys and beautiful things of life and his participation in pleasure-giving undertakings. Then he proceeded to develop the ability to resist all the desirable and pleasure-giving things of this life. In doing this the Puritan had one unselfish motive which was to aid civilization in its progress. Much earlier than the Puritans came the various

(1) See pp. 157-79

schools of Greek philosophy which were more or less ascetic. This Greek asceticism was usually related to some reasonable end, and sought the strengthening of the body and mind. The Greeks had a word which we will call sōphrōn. This word is hard to translate into English, probably our words temperate, general and merciful together explain its meaning.

> "Now the man or woman who is sōphrōn walks among the beauties and perils of the world, feeling the love, joy, anger and the rest; and through all he has that in his mind (1) which saves.-- Whom does it save? Not him only, but, as we should say, the whole situation. It saves the imminent evil from coming to be." (2)

Thus early Greek asceticism was after a fashion a reconciliation between real asceticism and idealism.

As Gilbert Murray says the ascetic insists on the need of power to resist or even despise and ignore all good and desirable things lest they should hinder the world in the attainment of something better. (3) He lives in the world of the mind or the spiritual world refusing to feel and enjoy the present reality of life. Our ascetics of the present day have various ways of expressing their beliefs. And too, they are ascetic in varying degrees; some are like the early schools of Greek philosophy which we have already mentioned and others are more like the Puritans.

(1) See Thea Kronborg, p. 73
(2) 5, p. 48
(3) See 5, p. 46

CHAPTER I

AVERSION FROM REALITY THROUGH METHOD

1.
Aesthetic Purpose of Impersonality

In her very earliest writing Cather showed through method her innate aversion to reality. She used methods that very much helped to make her novels, in truth, works of art. Cather herself appreciates the beautiful and so sensed the fact that she must not put herself into her novels if they were to be beautifully artistic. Zona Gale has sensed this same thing as the following quotation shows.

> "In the new fiction the author is retiring farther and farther from the front. If he is Bernard Shaw, he still sits in his own front door and is confessedly the best part of the show. But if he is most others, he avoids the ex cathedra comment, and obscures himself generally; and the evident effort to do a smart piece of work is left to others. There are modern books of which the reverse is true, but these are generally the cheap and the trivial and the temporary. Exhibitionism is not authorship." (1)

There are some who say that Cather has sacrificed everything for art but as Dorothy Canfield Fisher says this sacrifice is no more than the sacrifice a hungry man makes in eating a hearty meal. Now, why is it, that Cather is very anxious to express herself as a true artist? Surely there is some deeper reason than her own appreciation of art. The writer believes that the real reason for Cather's devotion to artistic expression is to be found in "The Song of the Lark" in Thea's reflection on the pottery of the Cliff-Dwellers.

> "All things made one feel that one ought to do one's best, and help to fulfill some desire of the dust that slept there. A dream had been dreamed there long ago, in the night of the ages, and the wind had whispered some promise to the sadness of

(1) K, p. 119

the savage. In their own way, these people had felt the beginnings of what was to come. These potsherds were like fetters that bound one to a long chain of human endeavor.----The Cliff Dwellers had lengthened the past. She had older and higher obligations." (1)

2.

Indirect Narrative Method

Even in her first novel, "Alexander's Bridge" there is proof that it was impossible for her to bring herself close to her readers. Although the narrative is told for the most part by the author in the third person, at times we find indirect narrative method used. Maurice Mainhall told Bartley Alexander about Hilda Burgoyne's success as an actress (2); Hilda herself told Alexander about their friends in Paris (3) and Prof. Wilson in the epilogue told of Winifred Alexander's life after her husband's death. (4) Through Alexander's letter to Hilda we learn of his emotions (5) and by a telegram we understand that he needed his wife at Moorlock on his last visit. (6) The reader first sees Winifred Alexander through the eyes of the same Prof. Wilson (7) who reveals to him the outstanding flaw in Bartley's character. A Boston lawyer tells us that Bartley Alexander is traveling in a day coach on his last journey to Moorlock. (8)

In "O Pioneers!" Cather makes comparatively little attempt to disguise her connection with the narrative. At times the reader thinks that he is to hear about, or witness some happening through one of the characters, then the author quietly tells everything herself. An example of this is the incident of

(1) III, pp. 306, 308 (2) I, p. 390 (3) I, p. 526
(4) I, p. 667 (5) I, 660 (6) I, p. 664
(7) I, p. 385 (8) I, p. 662

Emil Bergson and Marie Shabata as Emil shoots the ducks; at first it would seem that Carl Lindstrum was to describe it to the reader. After reporting Emil and Marie's conversation Cather is careful to tell us that Carl had not been able to hear much of the conversation. (1) The reader does see the murder of Emil and Marie through the eyes of Marie's husband who is their murderer because he has found them together in the orchard. (2)

Willa Cather in "The Song of the Lark" does not to any marked degree make use of indirect narrative method, yet this indirect narrative method is present so that we know it is still characteristic of her writing. The Epilogue tells the reader about Thea Kronborg's success as a singer, but indirectly it is told for everything is seen through the eyes of Tillie Kronborg and the Moonstone people. Even Thea's marriage to Frederick Ottenburg is only casually alluded to.

> "When the Denver papers announced that Thea Kronborg had married Frederick Ottenburg, the head of the Brewer's Trust, Moonstone people expected that Tillie's Vain-gloriousness would take another form. But Tillie had hoped Thea would marry a title and she did not boast much about Ottenburg,--at least not until after her memorable trip to Kansas City to hear Thea sing." (3)

Through Dr. Archie's conversation with Mr. Kronborg we learn of Ray Kennedy's plan as to how Thea should use the money she was to get from his life insurance. (4) As Thea talks with Ottenburg she tells him of her conversation with Dr. Archie in which she had said,

(1) II, pp. 127-9
(2) II, pp. 258-64
(3) III, p. 485
(4) III, pp. 150-2

> "And I told him that I wanted to marry you, and that I was awfully happy until you told me that you couldn't marry me because--well, I told him why." (1)

This is all that the reader hears or knows about Ottenburg's confession to Thea of his first marriage. Of course the reader knows from the author's "flash-back" (2) of this early marriage and can imagine the story for himself. Yet, Cather doesn't in any way admit a close connection with this important episode of the narrative, for Thea is simply telling Ottenburg what she had told Dr. Archie and so the reader feels the near barrier.

Willa Cather twice removes herself from any connection with the story of "My Antonia." Jim Burden tells the story as a reminiscence, using the first person. As we read the story we must remember that Jim was but a small boy when many of the things, which he recalls, happened. Then as if to further sever any possible contact with the story, the author often causes Jim to repeat what others have told him as if they were speaking.(3) The story of the death of the Russian bride is told by Antonia; this story is not important save as it gives a background for Russian Peter and Pavel who were Antonia's neighbors. (4) The hired man, Jake, tells Jim the story of Mr. Shimerda's death. Antonia's life might have been very different had her father lived, for he was a gentle, well educated man who was very fond of music. Tired out with his brief struggle in a strange land to which he had come because of his wife's desire for wealth, Mr. Shimerda prepared his body for death and then

(1) III, p. 363 (2) III, pp. 333-38
(3) See also IV, pp. 31-2, 172-4, 286-8, 407-10, 410-12
(4) IV, pp. 63-7

shot himself out in the rude stable. (1) Jim learns of Antonia's life with Donovan and of the birth of her baby from the widow Steavens. Thus Jim Burden tells another eventful happening in Antonia's life as if someone else were talking. (2)

Several things of importance in "One of Ours" are told in the indirect narrative method. (3) Leonard Dawson's story in which he tells how he gave Bayless Wheeler a black eye gives the reader an insight into Bayless' character and an understanding of his attitude toward life. (4) Mrs. Wheeler in her conversation with Claude tells him why his father discharged Jerry, one of the hired men. (5) Through Leonard Dawson's talk with Ernest Havel, the reader hears about Claude's accident which happened while he was ploughing with the team of mules. This accident is noteworthy for the sickness it caused led Claude to ask Enid Royce to marry him. As he thinks over what Leonard has told him Ernest decides that Claude never seems to fit in right and that he is unlucky. (6)

Gladys Farmer feels very sorry for Claude when she realizes that he is going to marry Enid Royce; Cather yet holding herself aloof lets us know about this feeling by giving Gladys' thoughts. (7) Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler's conversation reveals the fact that Claude and Enid are actually going to be married, and that neither of them approves of the marriage. (8) Evidently there are three persons who feel that Claude married to Enid can't live out his potentialities, and each one knows a different Claude.

(1) IV, pp. 117-18 (2) IV, pp. 345-9; this paper p. Antonia
(3(See also V, pp. 241, 337-8, 374, 376, 455
(4) V, pp. 14-15 (5) V, pp. 47 (6) V, pp. 137-9
(7) V, pp. 154-6 (8) V, pp. 174-5

The story of Marie Louise is told to Claude by an old French woman; this story of a French girl, who so loved a German officer that she killed herself in his presence, is simply a homely incident of the World War. But yet, it serves to impress upon Claude a new misery caused by war. (1)

Although the story of "A Lost Lady" is told in the third person, the reader unconsciously receives it as a series of Niel Herbert's impressions so cleverly does Cather keep herself out of the narrative. (2) It is through Niel's eyes that he learns that Ellinger has spent the night with Marian in her room. Then Niel's mental reaction to this happening is told, for he had lost one of the most beautiful things in his life. (3) Several years later it is Niel who sees Ivy Peters unconcernedly put both arms around Marian, his hands meeting over her breast. This time Niel felt that he had for good and for all lost his ideal. (4) After Niel leaves Sweet Water for good his uncle writes him news of Marian Forrester; in the book we find quotations from two of these letters. (5) Then Ed Elliott tells Niel of his meeting with Marian in Buenos Ayres after her marriage to Henry Collins. He tells him that Marian had sent her love to Niel and wanted him to know that things had turned out well for her. Elliott adds that he knows Marian Forrester is now dead for three years ago the Grand Army Post in Sweet Water had received from Henry Collins a draft for the future care of Captain Forrester's grave in memory of his <u>late</u> wife Marian Forrester Collins. (6)

(1) V, pp. 437-9 (2) See also VI, pp. 70, 90-1, 137, 149
(3) VI, p. 86 (4) VI, pp. 169-70
(5) VI, pp. 170-1 (6) VI, pp. 172-4

"The Professor's House" has in it many examples of the indirect narrative method. (1) The reader learns that Kathleen, Prof. St. Peter's second daughter, had herself cared for Tom Outland, through her conversation with her husband. This fact is important because it explains in part the attitude of Kathleen toward her sister Rosamond who, as Outland's heir, is receiving the money from the Outland Patent. (2) As Mrs. Crane and Prof. St. Peter talk we learn that Louis Marsellus had come to Hamilton a stranger, at the time when the whole city was stirred up over Tom Outland's death, and that he had become interested in Outland's documents. Soon Marsellus had become engaged to Rosamond St. Peter and from her received all of Outland's papers concerning the gas he had discovered. Then Marsellus had put a great deal of money into popularizing this gas. Later he and Rosamond had reaped a great fortune from its sale. Mrs. Crane went on to say that Rosamond had replied to her letter asking about their share of the money received--Dr. Crane had given Outland advice and help in perfecting the formula for this gas--through her lawyer, saying that all claims against the Outland patent would be considered in due order. (3) Tom Outland's story which covers about one hundred pages in the middle of the book is entirely told in the first person as a reminiscence thus severing completely the author's connection with it. In that story we get acquainted with a very interesting character who is symbolical of that part of the Professor's nature which so revered the past and linked itself with an idea . (4)

(1) See also VII, pp. 128, 152
(2) VII, pp. 109-110
(3) VII, pp. 135-9
(4) VII, pp. 179-253

Willa Cather completely disguises her connection with the narrative contained in "My Mortal Enemy" by having Nellie Birdseye tell the story. And in no forceful way does she relate this story, many events of which took place when she was but a child. The information about Myra Henshawe's death which Nellie gives the reader she herself got from the Negro cabman who was the last human being to talk with Myra as he took her on her final ride. (1)

Indirect narrative plays an important part in "Death Comes for the Archbishop." Some of the things told in this way have to do with the story itself. (2) It is an Indian boy who tells Fr. Latour that Fr. Vaillant is ill at Las Vegas having contracted black measles from dying Indians. (3) A reminiscence of Fr. Latour contains Monsignor Mazzucchi's story of Fr. Vaillant's interview with Pope Gregory XVI. This is not only a rather humorous story, but it is also a character-revealing one. Fr. Vaillant's personal magnetism and his unfeigned interest in his mission work and his fellow missionaries are brought out in it. (4) We learn that Pike's Peak needs a missionary through excerpts from a letter written to Fr. Latour by the Bishop of Leavenworth. (5)

Other things told merely introduce legends and folk-lore which seem to pervade the book. (6) Padre Herrera's story of the shrine of Our Lady of Guadaloupe in America is a pretty story of Mary's appearance to a poor convert, Brother Juan. This does reveal something of the beliefs of the people with

(1) VIII, pp. 117-18 (2) See also IX, pp. 34, 118, 139-40, 155-6
(3) IX, p. 119 (4) IX, pp. 230-2
(5) IX, pp. 247-8 (6) See also IX, pp. 281-4

whom the Fathers lived and worked. (1) Father Jesus' version of the Legend of Fray Baltazar is, in truth, the life story of an Acoma priest who lived upon his people. Fr. Baltazar brought his tyranical career to an end by hastily killing his serving boy, for soon thereafter the natives dropped him over a cliff to his death. (2) Some of the Pecos customs and ceremonies which had to do with their undying fire and snake are told by Zeb Orchard to Fr. Latour. (3)

Because it is hard to separate the indirect narrative method from the reminiscent narrative method in "Shadows on the Rock" the writer includes both under reminiscent narrative method. (4)

3.

Reminiscent Narrative Method

As Cather uses reminiscent narrative in her novels it makes them more delicately artistic. Yet, of course, it emphasizes her lack of the sense of the living present. These quotations, all taken from her novels, reveal to us intimately Cather's attitude toward the past and memories of it.

> "Some memories are realities, and are better than anything that can ever happen to one again." (5)

> "I guess everybody thinks about old times, even the happiest people." (6)

> "There are all those early memories; one cannot get another set; one has but these." (7)

> "There were treasures of memory which no lodging-house keeper could attach. One carried things about in one's head, long after one's linen could be smuggled out in a tuning bag." (8)

(1) IX, pp. 46-50 (2) IX, pp. 105-117 (3) IX, pp. 136-8
(4) See pp. 34-5 (5) IV, p. 370 (7) X, p. 181
(6) IV, p. 364 (8) III, P. 28

Willa Cather at the time she wrote "Alexander's Bridge" was trying to interest herself in the present, but constantly she found that it was the past that truly gripped her mind. As a result of this struggle between her interest in the past and the present she occasionally caused her characters to recall past events thus linking the present with the past. Prof. Wilson recalls his impression of Bartley Alexander as a student, in his conversation with Mrs. Alexander. (1) Alexander after seeing Hilda Burgoyne act in "Bog Lights" recalls the circumstances of his marriage to Winifred. (2) Later Hilda and Alexander remember together their first walk in Paris. (3) As his train crossed the first bridge he had built Alexander thinks of his youth and his first love for Winifred. (4) On that same journey the sight of boys sitting around their camp-fire causes Alexander to think of his camp-fire of years ago on a sand bar in a Western River. (5)

After the publication of "Alexander's Bridge" Cather gave herself up to the pleasure of recalling the past with a Virgilian tenderness and making it live again in "O Pioneers!" Even now that she was not struggling to write about the present when she wanted to write of the past Cather continued to add reminiscences to her novel. Carl and Alexandria think of their country when it was a "wild old beast"; (6) then later they recall for Marie Shabata's entertainment their trip to Hanover at the time of the circus and their purchase of three pecks of apricots. (7) Alexandria always delighted in certain memories

(1) I, p. 388 (2) I, p. 391 (3) I, p. 528
(4) I, p. 663 (5) I, p. 663 (6) II, p. 118
(7) II, p. 137

of days when she had been close to the earth and had thrilled at the germination in the soil. Too, she was happy reliving certain days she had had with Emil; on one of these they had seen and admired a solitary wild duck swimming and diving in a little inlet; to Alexandria this duck had become a symbol of eternity. (1) Not long before Emil's death Alexandria tells Emil something of their father as she first remembered him. (2) After Carl comes back to Alexandria he tells her of seeing Emil and Marie out by the pond over a year before. (3)

In the "Song of the Lark" the author introduces many reminiscent passages. (4) Spanish Johnny tells Thea years later about her first visit to his house; he tells her how she, a little girl, had listened to him play the guitar and then had sung with him. It was then that Johnny had told Mr. Kronborg that Thea had music in her. (5) Thea's account of her theft of the little sachet, as she relates it to Fred Ottenburg, is both interesting and character revealing.

> "'A sachet. A little blue silk bag of arris-root powder. There was a whole counterful of them, marked down to fifty cents. I'd never seen any before, and they seemed irresistible. I took one up and wandered about the store with it. Nobody seemed to notice, so I carried it off.'
>
> "Fred laughed. 'Crazy child! Why, your things always smell of arris; is it a penance?'
>
> "'No I love it. But I saw that the firm didn't lose anything by me. I went back and bought it there whenever I had a quarter to spend. I got a lot to take to Arizona. I made it up to them.'" (6)

As Dr. Archie sits in his hotel room in New York he falls

(1) II, pp. 204-5 (2) II, pp. 236-8 (3) II, p. 304
(4) See also III, pp. 30, 49, 53, 94, 205, 215, 279, 339-41, 54
(5) III, p. 227 (6) III, pp. 375-6

to thinking and looking back over his life. He decides that he would like to relive his college days again, and also the years when Thea Kronborg had been growing up; but all the rest of his life puzzles him. (1) Dr. Archie and Thea are talking alone after a number of years, so it is natural that they should fall into a reminiscent mood. Then we get our only knowledge of Thea's love affair with Nordquist; very simply Thea says,

"He came to me one day and told me he thought his wife would settle for a hundred thousand marks and consent to a divorce. I got very angry and sent him away. Next day he came back and said he thought she'd take fifty thousand." (2) Dr. Archie recalls Thea's fight with pneumonia as a child. (3) Then Thea says she often dreams of her home:

> "In my sleep I go all about it, and look in the right drawers and cupboards for everything. I often dream that I am hunting for my rubbers in that pile of overshoes that was always under the halrack in the hall. I pick up every overshoe and know whose it is, but I can't find my own. Then the school bell begins to ring and I begin to cry. That's the house I rest in when I'm tired. All the old furniture and the worn spots in the carpet--it rests my mind to go over them." (4)

What we learn of Fred Ottenburg's marriage to Edith Beirs is a reminiscence of Fred's as he sits by himself in the smoking car. Fred has asked Thea to marry him and now is disturbed by the fact that he is already married and has been, since he was twenty. He recalls the events that led to the hasty and most unhappy marriage and those which followed it--his wife now lives in Santa Barbara. (5) After a call from Fred Ottenburg Dr. Archie is sitting in the library of his Denver home thinking of

(1) III, pp. 399-400 (2) III, p. 456
(3) III, p. 457 (4) III, p. 458
(5) III, pp. 332-9

to laboring and troubling [illegible] even his life. He confesses that he would like to relive his college days again, and also the [illegible] when they [illegible] and [illegible] for all the rest of his life varies dim. (1) Mr. Gorlie had [illegible] the [illegible] after a number of years, so if [illegible] this [illegible] would fall into a [illegible] mood. Then he got our [illegible] knowledge of Phoebe Lynn after with [illegible]: [illegible] [illegible].

"He came to me one [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

the past. From his thoughts we learn how Mrs. Kronborg had died because she had felt so keenly the death of her husband. We also hear something of Thea's struggle in Germany. (1)

One of Thea's favorite devices to make herself sleep is pretending she is again a girl at home preparing to go to bed and then going to bed. Even when she is very nervous and tired this usually "induces long and refreshing sleep." (2)

The whole story of "My Antonia" is one of reminiscence. (3) The following sentence which is the last in the book emphasizes the reminiscent note of the book: "Whatever we had missed, we possessed together the precious, the incommunicable past." (4) Many of the characters in the story themselves indulge in reminiscencing. Aside from intensifying the author's lack of the sense of the living present and adding to the artisticness of the story these reminiscences are of little importance. We will speak of only one of the reminiscences. Jim Burden and Antonia are, for a few minutes alone after Antonia has become a hired girl in Black Hawk. The pagoda-like elders remind her of the old country so much that she tells Jim how in the old country her father and his friend sat under the elder bushes playing the violin and the trombone and talking--the talk was beautiful more beautiful than she had ever heard in this country. Antonia says that they talked about music, the woods, God, and their youth. Then she adds:

> "You think, Jimmy, that maybe my father's spirit can go back to those old places?
> "You know, Jim, my father was different from my mother. He did not have to marry my mother, and

(1) III, pp. 402-8 (2) III, pp. 472-3
(3) See also IV, pp. 42-3, 77-8, 116, 121, 124, 202-3, 230, 241, 276, 295, 329-30 (4) IV, p. 419

the road. Then his thoughts on Laura Lee Ann. Grandma had died because she had felt so sorrowfully the death of her husband. He also saw something of Uncle's struggle in Germany. (1)

One of Uncle's favorite lessons to John Marshall Clark concerning how to wash a girl's clothes was going to go to war and then going to bed. Even when she is very tiresome and this usually happens then and becoming clear." (2)

The whole story of "Mr. Uncle" is one of sentimentality. The following passage which is the last in the book, concerning the sentimental side of the book: "Whatever he had [illegible] Laughter the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]." (3) [illegible] of the [illegible] in the story [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

all her brothers quarreled with him because he did. I used to hear the old people at home whisper about it. They said he could have paid my mother money and not married her. But he was older than she was and too kind to treat her like that. He lived in his mother's house and she was a poor girl come in to do the work. After my father married her, my grandmother never let my mother come into the house again. When I went to my grandmother's funeral was the only time I was ever in my grandmother's house. Don't that seem strange?" (1)

In "One of Ours" there is reminiscent narrative. (2) On his journey home from college for the Christmas holidays Claude reflects with pleasure upon the happenings of the first half of the college year. He had taken at the State University a course in European History which had seemed vital to him; and he had come in contact with the Erlichs from whom he had begun to learn much about living. (3) As the train moves slowly on he thinks over in detail his visits with the Erlichs. (4) Later when Claude is recivering from his illness he enjoys Enid Royce's calls so much that he begins to think over again and again his boyhood days in which at times Enid had played an important part. He remembers the exercises of a certain Children's Day; too, he remembers the day when he fished Enid out of the mill-dam. (5) After Claude has been in France with Gerald Gerhardt for some little time he at last induces Gerald to recall his reasons for entering the army. (6)

In "A Lost Lady" too there is a bit of reminiscent narrative. (7) Niel recalls his first glimpse of Mrs. Forrester as she had alighted from her carriage and disappeared into the Episcopal church on Sunday morning. Then he had recognized her

(1) IV, pp. 268-70 (2) (See also V, pp. 23, 137, 179-80, 121 (216, 255, 246, 301, 305
(3) p. 116
(4) V, pp. 37-45 (5) V, p. 143-4
(6) p. 88 and V, pp. 408-10 (7) See also VI, p. 166

as belonging to a different world. (1) For Mrs. Ogden's benefit Captain Forrester reminisces over his first finding, back in Indian times, this spot where he had later built his home. (2) On that night when Marian Forrester entertains several of the Sweet Water boys at dinner Niel asks her to tell them of her first meeting with Captain Forrester. Marian's recital of this meeting is really a reminiscence, yet after the first four words Cather tells it in the third person thus making it even more distant. (3)

Reminiscence is most important in "The Professor's House" in fact the story is one of reminiscence. As Prof. St. Peter eats his lunch alone in his old study he recalls buying dahlias in Paris when he was a young man. From that pleasant reminiscence St. Peter passes in thought to the months he spent as tutor to the Thierault boys, and finally to the summer when the design of "The Spanish Adventurers" unfolded itself to him. (4) Reminded of Tom Outland by Scott Macgregor, Prof. St. Peter remembers the first appearance of Outland in his garden one Saturday morning. He seems to hear their conversation once more and recalls his early impressions of Tom Outland the ideal student and friend of the family. (5) During the summer that Lillian and the Marselluses were in France St. Peter thinks much of the past and Tom Outland. In fact we learn the story of Outland's life as St. Peter reminisces. (6) Near the end of the story St. Peter discovers the pleasure of day-dreaming. Then he enjoys very much thinking of the boy he had been back in Solomon Valley,

(1) VI, p. 42 (2) VI, pp. 51-54
(3) VI, pp. 164-66 (4) VII, pp. 102-6
(5) See pp. 112-26 (6) VII, pp. 172-253

Kansas; this boy had been interested in earth, woods and water; he had been primitive in all things. (1)

In truth the whole novel, "My Mortal Enemy" is reminiscent and so emphatically expresses Cather's lack of feeling of the living present. Nellie Birdseye is in a reminiscent mood as she tells the story which is clearly all of the past. This veil of reminiscence adds to the art of the novel but detracts from its reality. Many sentences begin as does this one. "How well I remember those long, beautifully modelled hands." (2)

And now for the reminiscence of "Death Comes for the Archbishop". (3) As he is convalescing one spring how Fr. Vaillant enjoys reminiscing over the events that had taken place earlier in his life in the month of May. (4) His recollections of a Pima Indian's exhibition to him of the paraphernalia for celebrating Mass which had been hidden in a cave for generations make him say that it was the situation of the frontier in a parable. "The Faith, in that wild frontier is like a buried treasure; they guard it, but they do not know how to use it to their soul's salvation. A word, a prayer, a service, is all that is needed to set free those souls in bondage." (5) This really sounded the keynote of Fr. Vaillant's life for as a missionary priest he did that which restored so many to the Faith. Just before he first starts for Pike's Peak Fr. Vaillant recalls the visit he had made to a boy murderer, Ramon Armajillo, who had killed a man because he had wrung the neck of his

(1) VII, pp. 263-7 (2) VIII, p. 58
(3) See also IX, pp. 41, 182, 213, 225-32, 254, 280
(4) IX, pp. 202-4 (5) IX, p. 207

pet fighting cock. Such a gentle boy it was that he had found making a pair of tiny buckskin boots for the little Santiago of his home church. (1)

The weeks just before his death Fr. Latour allows himself to reminisce frequently. Through his reminiscences at this time the reader first learns how the boys Jean Latour and Joseph Vaillant had stolen away from their native Riom to become missionary priests. Too, he learns more of Fr. Vaillant's life as a missionary priest and finally of his death and funeral. (2) The Bishop lives over again his intercourse with the Navajo Indians. (3)

It is almost impossible to draw a line between reminiscence and indirect narrative in "Shadows on the Rock" as most of the indirect narrative is reminiscent. (4) An exception is the story of the life of Noel Chabanel told by Fr. Hector. Noel Chabanel was a martyr who perished in the Iroquois raid of '49; but as Fr. Hector says his martyrdom <u>was his life not his death</u>. His life in Canada was one long humiliation and disappointment, for long seasons he had even felt that God himself had withdrawn from him. His physical being so desired to return to France that he believed he must mortify it by remaining in Canada. So after he had been in Canada five years he made a vow of perpetual stability in the Huron missions. The two remaining years of his life were spent among these Indians whose ways of living were loathsome to him and whose language he could never learn.(5) The story of old Bichet is told to Cecile by her father as he

(1) IX, pp. 250-1
(2) IX, pp. 285-92
(3) IX, pp. 295-301
(4) (See also X, pp. 83, 103, 215, 218, (220, 223, 237
(5) X, pp. 150-3

himself knew it. (1) Antoine Frichette's story of the death of Michel Proulx is a reminiscent narrative which introduces a bit of reality to the book. (2) And Mother Juschereau's story of Sister Catherine and the Pecheresse Marie which she told to Cecile is one that she remembered as having been told to her by Sister Catherine herself. (3) Cecile after listening to this story falls to musing upon the life story of this same Sister Catherine who had become Catherine de Saint Augustin. (4)

As Cecile and her father talk together evenings he likes to tell her of his life in the old shop-house on the Quai des Celestins in Paris. His first meeting with the Count Fontenac whose town house with its carriage court was next to his father's shop is the subject of one of his favorite reminiscent stories. (5) Jacques had a pleasant but vague remembrance of having spent a night with old Bishop Laval. (6) The story of Jeanne Le Ber, the recluse of Montreal, is one that Cecile loved to muse over. (7) Blinker's story of his own life as he tells it to Auclair reveals the power of the mind over the body. (8) Count Frontenac recalls for Auclair's hearing his two last audiences with the King of France which had been disappointing. (9) After Auclair leaves his chamber the Count remembers one time in Paris when no one but Auclair and his father had paid him any marked respect--he had expected much display of respect for he had just returned from foreign wars. (10) The story of the last hours and death of the Count comes to the reader as a musing of Auclair. (11)

(1) X, pp. 90-3 (2) X, pp. 139-45 (3)X, pp. 37-39
(4) X, pp. 40-42 (5) X, pp. 17-20 (6) X, pp. 70-77
(7) X, pp. 130-6, 178-83 (8) X, pp. 158-63
(9) X, pp. 240-1 (10) X, p. 242 (11) X, pp. 262-3

4.

Avoidance Of Scenes In Which Character And Emotion Come To A Crisis In Physical Action

From the very beginning Cather avoided in her novels big scenes, or those in which character is made memorable by physical action. Whether at first she did this because she felt she hadn't the ability to handle such scenes, or because in that way she knew she could preserve her aloofness from the action of her novels is a question. Be that as it may, she has never introduced these scenes into her novels. After reading her first five novels T. K. Whipple wrote that in them there were only two scenes in which character and emotion came to a crisis in physical action. One of the scenes was the snow storm scene in "One of Ours"; in this scene Claude and the hired man shovel their way to the barn and on to the hog house only to find that the flat thatched room of the hog house has fallen in. Then continuing to shovel with almost super-human power they at last reach the pigs lying in a heap at one end of the shed. The hired man would have given up long before they reached the pigs had Claude not spurred him on with such fiercely spoken words as these, "Well, you can go back to the house and sit by the fire." (1) But after everything is over Claude is no longer a man of action, he becomes once more an irresolute person given to reflection. (2) The other scene is in "A Lost Lady"; in that Niel cuts the telephone wire just as Marian Forrester begins to talk over the telephone too intimately to her lover, Frank

(1) V, p. 99 (2) V, p. 97-103

Ellinger--Frank has just married Constance Ogden. (1) The writer agrees with Whipple in his selection of scenes and hesitates whether or not to add the scene from "O Pioneers!" in which Frank Shabata shoots his wife and Emil as they lie together under the orchard trees. But if this be a big scene Cather holds herself aloof from it by causing us to see it through the eyes of Frank Shabata, the murderer. (2) In Cather's other novels there are no truly big scenes--in "Death Comes for the Archbishop" the scene in which Magdalena silently warns the two Fathers of danger (3) can hardly be called such a scene.

But in Cather's novels there are many scenes which just fall short of portraying character and emotion at a crisis in physical action. A few of these scenes we will now speak of. After his Sunday evening dinner with Hilda Burgoyne Alexander and Hilda are both ill at ease until " with one hand he threw down the window and with the other--still standing behind her--he drew her back against him. She uttered a little cry, threw her arms over her head and drew his face down to hers. 'Are you going to let me love you a little, Bartley?' she whispered." (4) There the scene ends just as real emotion is to be felt. When Hilda is playing in New York she visits Alexander at his apartment, just as the big scene is about to begin the chapter ends. Alexander said, "Try him again, Hilda. Try him once again. She looked up into his eyes and hid her face in her hands." (5) The reader is left to imagine what happened next. The scene in

(1) VI, pp. 129-35; 13, pp. 331-2 (2) II, pp. 258-64
(3) IX, p 69 (4) I, p. 529
(5) I, p. 662

which Hilda and Alexander first meet during his last visit in London has in it more real emotion than any other of the book for Hilda's character and emotion came to a crisis as she " sprang up like a flame. She stood over him with her hands clenched at her side, her body rigid. 'No,' she gasped. 'It's too late to ask that----Keep away if you wish; when have I followed you? But, if you come to me, I'll do as I see fit----- Bartley, you're cowardly!' " (1) The meetings of Carl Linstrum and Alexandria are all lacking in real emotion but we are not surprised for both of them are calm and unemotional persons. In truth Alexandria's call on Frank Shabata in the prison has more suppressed emotion than we believed possible for Alexandria to have. (2) The calmness of Alexandria is best shown in the scene in which her two brothers come to warn her about Carl, and to remind her that the property of a family belongs to the men; at the end Alexandria simply says "I think I would rather not have lived to find out what I have today." (3)

Several scenes in which character and emotion might well have met are entirely left out of "The Song of the Lark". Fred's confession to Thea of his first marriage is one of these; another is Fred's first meeting with Thea after she has become a successful artist. Then there are some scenes in which too little real emotion is displayed thus making the reader feel that everything is not just as it should be. Fred's call on Thea as she was making plans about Dr. Archie's visit is disappointing as far as Cather tells it, yet there is more sup-

(1) I, p. 534 (2) II, pp. 292-7
(3) II, p. 172

pressed emotion in it than is usual in her novels. But Fred doesn't seem real as he whispers to Thea. "Good-night dear and wonderful--wonderful and dear How can you get away from me when I will always follow you, through every wall, through every door, wherever you go." (1)

Then Fred's farewell to Thea on the night before the day she was to sail for Germany to study is not all that we want it to be. After an embrace in which Willa Cather says that they lived over again all others, they spoke as follows:

> "You are good to me, you are!"
>
> "Get all you can. Be generous with yourself. Don't stop short of splendid things. I want them for you more than I want anything else, more than I want one splendid thing for myself. I can't help feeling that you'll gain, somehow, by my losing so much. That you'll gain the very thing I lose. Take care of her as Harsayne said. She's wonderful! He kissed her and went out of the door without looking back, just as if he were coming again tomorrow." (2)

Big scenes seem lacking in "My Antonia." Jim Burden and Antonia care for each other, but in such an emotionless way that these big scenes are impossible when they meet. That night when Jim sees Antonia home and kisses her in the Cutter's yard she simply says; "Why Jim! You know you ain't right to kiss me like that. I'll tell your grandmother on you!" (3) After that Antonia warns Jim against having much to do with Lena Lingard. Finally she tells him that he is going to make something of himself, and that she is proud of him and always will be. (4) Again when Jim and Antonia first meet after the birth of Antonia's baby by Larry Donovan there is but little emotion

(1) III, p. 360 (2) III, P. 380
(3) IV, p. 254 (4) IV, pp. 254-6

shown by either of them. Jim tells Antonia of his studies and of his plans for law work in New York City. Antonia tells him that she has decided that her life work is to see that her little girl has a better chance than ever she had. Before they part Jim explains to Antonia how much she means to him; yet it is in the realm of the mind that she plays this important part. He says, "The idea of you is a part of my mind; you influence my likes and dislikes, all my tastes, hundreds of times when I don't realize it. You really are a part of me." (1) At the end of the story Jim Burden visits Antonia and her family, for she is now married to Anton Cuzak and the mother of about a dozen children. Antonia and Jim are glad to see each other but there is no display of passionate fervor even then, everything is very much matter of fact. (2)

Other than the scene we have already mentioned (3) "One of Ours" is lacking in big scenes. The scene in which Claude proposes to Enid is lacking in real emotion because of her lack of vital feeling and his fear of himself. (4) When Claude and Gerald are staying with Madame Fleury, whose son René had been a true violinist before his death in the World War, Gerald is asked to play on Rene's 'Amate'." He plays, and the suppressed emotion is only suggested by Cather. (5) In "A Lost Lady" there is one big scene (6) and there are several other scenes which approach big scenes. Marian Forrester's ride to the Sweet Water Cedars is such a scene. (7) Another is the scene in which Marian learns that Captain Forrester has lost all his

(1) IV, p. 363 (2) IV, pp. 371-417 (3) p. 36
(4) V, pp. 152-4 (5) V, pp. 417-18 (6) pp. 36-7
(7) VI, pp. 62-68

money. (1) Marian's dinner party at which Annie and Ivy Peters, some village boys and Niel were present is yet another one. (2)

Little real emotion is shown in any scene in "The Professors House." As Kathleen and Scott McGregor talk together after Rosamond has been particularly unpleasant when asked about a bracelet, a turquoise set in dull silver which Tom Outland had given her there is much implied emotion. But Cather holds herself strictly apart from the scene. (3) From the scene in which St. Peter is nearly asphyxiated Cather stands aloof. In fact it is not a big scene although it easily might have been made into one. (4) And in "My Mortal Enemy" big scenes are lacking. Myra's dramatic ride to meet death can hardly be called a big scene. Myra and Oswald's quarrel which Nellie describes as she overheard it is but the quarrel of two children (5)--yet probably there was much that a child of Nellie's age couldn't understand. The scene in which Myra Henshawe sends Nellie away after she (Nellie) has chided her for being so hard on her husband again illustrates this lack of emotion; then wit took its place. (6) In one scene of "Death Comes For the Archbishop" we have said character and emotion meet in physical action (7) but how quiet that action is! The story of Sada's midnight visit to the cathedral is lacking in emotion, (8) as is the description of the parting of Father's Latour and Vaillant as the latter starts for Pikes Peak. (9) Real emotions have no place in "Shadows On The Rock." In none of the

(1) VI, pp. 88-94 (2) VI, pp. 157-166 (3)VII, pp. 109-110
(4) VII, pp. 275-83 (5) VIII, p. 63 (6) VIII, pp. 105-6
(7) p. 37 (8) IX, pp. 213-20 (9) IX, pp. 255-7

scenes where Pierre Charron and Cecile are together do we find any display of emotion. (1) In truth Cecile shows far more real affection for Quebec than she shows for this man who is to be her husband. No, there are no scenes in which real emotion is shown in this book which "breathes tranquility and is gently bathed in atmosphere of church" as Louis Kronenberger says. (2)

As we reflect on the dearth of scenes in which character and emotion come to a crisis in physical action in Cather's novels we wonder if two things besides her artistry don't help in explaining this. First, is Cather's emphasis on the world of the mind which increased from novel to novel. And secondly, is her conception of passion which is so broad that it includes passion for: One's work, one's children, one's friends, one's land, one's memories, and beautiful objects and experiences.(3)

(1) pp. 108, 110
(2) 9, pp. 134-40
(3) See 1, pp. 563-5

CHAPTER II

AVERSION FROM REALITY THROUGH STYLE

1.

The Chronicle and the Method of Implication Contrasted. (1)

In writing her novels Willa Cather has a style of her own which is eclectic to a marked degree. This style, for lack of a better name, we will call the method of implication (2) in contrast to chronicle style. In "Alexander's Bridge" Cather analyzed the main characters, this she never did again. While reading her other novels we come to know a character through his acts, conversation, and reflection; not through wearying analysis. Contrasting characters are to be found in all her novels, but never does the author attempt to draw the reader's attention to the contrasts. The following table suggests some of the outstanding contrasting characters: (3)

Character	Contrasting Character	Novel
Alexandria	Marie, Bergson boys	II
Emil and Marie	Ame dee and Angelique	II
Thea	Her older sister, other singers	III
Antonia	Lena Lingard, Jim Burden	IV
Claude Wheeler	His brothers, Erlich boys and Gerald Gerhardt	V
Niel Herbert	Ivy Peters	VI
Marian Forrester	Capt. Forrester	VI
Prof. St. Peter	Mrs. St. Peter, other professors	VII
Tom Outland	Rodney Blake	VII
Myra Henshawe	Young girl who is a reporter, Oswald Henshawe	VIII
Fr. Latour	Fr. Vaillant, native Mexican priests	IX

Not only are these characters representative, but they also become symbolical as Cather portrays them.

The love relationships of her characters, whether they be illicit or not Cather conveys to the reader mainly by suggestion or implication. Physical passion is never represented in her

(1) See also pp. 46-48
(2) See p. 12-13
(3) See pp. 68-130; 162-179

novels, yet in some of them it is very artistically suggested as in the illicit love relationship of Marian Forrester and Frank Ellinger in "A Lost Lady." This love relationship of Marian Forrester and Frank Ellinger is two or three times implied but never actually depicted. The description of Marian's ride with Ellinger to the cedar grove on the Sweet Water (1) is replete with suggestion of physical passion. This remark of Marian's made after they had returned to the sleigh suggests physical passion satisfied. "It doesn't matter if we are late for dinner. Nothing matters." (2) And how much is implied in this paragraph and how far removed from any apparent connection with it is the author.

> "After tying his flowers with a twist of meadow-grass, Niel went up the hill through the grove and softly round the still house to the north side of Mrs. Forrester's own room, where the door-like green shutters were closed. As he bent to place the flowers on the sill, he heard from within a woman's soft laughter; impatient, indulgent, teasing, eager. Then another laugh, very different, a man's, and it was fat and lazy,--ended in something like a yawn."(3)

Again this paragraph implies much of Marian Forrester's intimacy with Ivy Peters.

> "Going over to see her (Mrs. Forrester) one summer evening, he (Niel Herbert) stopped a moment by the dining-room window to look at the honeysuckle. The dining-room door was open into the kitchen, and there Mrs. Forrester stood at a table making pastry. Ivy Peters came in at the kitchen door, walked up behind her, and unconcernedly put both arms around her, hishands meeting over her breast. She did not move, did not look up, but went on rolling out pastry." (4)

Very differently would such writers as Robert Herrick and Theodore Dreiser have treated these scenes which we have just re-

(1) VI, pp. 62-68 (2) VI, p. 67
(3) VI, p. 86 (4) VI, pp. 169-70

ferred to. But Willa Cather is a true artist, while they are not.

Now we say that every one of Cather's novels implies very much. But "My Mortal Enemy," which is Cather's shortest novel, implies so much that Elizabeth Shipley Sergeant says that its meaning comes to little and that what is left out counts for more than that which is put in. (1) In fact this entire novel may be called an emphatic illustration of the method of implication.

2.

Simplicity As An Excision From the Complexity of Life (2)

The narrative of Cather's novels is simply told; hence her novels are lacking in that complexity which characterizes modern life, and so reflect the author's calmness and unconcern over present day affairs. Yet this simplicity is Willa Cather's by choice, for she feels that the modern American novel is "over furnished" so that it may impress or entertain the reader. She prefers that her novels be artistic rather than amusing or didactic. When Cather introduces a character she does not attempt to explain to us in detail his trade or profession as does Theodore Dreiser. Nor does she, like Christopher Morley, insert Puckish scenes to entertain the reader. The characters of Cather's novels never try to analyze their actions, as she believes that they would be dehumanized by such analysis.

The background of her novels she desires the reader to feel as she herself once felt it, yet rarely does she give any minute

(1) See 12, pp 91-4
(2) See pp. 44-5

description of the country of her novels. The reader feels the strength and power of the prairie, the mesa, and the rocks from the effect they have on the characters of the novels.

The sentences themselves, short and well worded, reflect Cather's aversion to the complexity of modern life. The entire book, "A Lost Lady" may be taken as an illustration of the simplicity and conciseness of Cather's style. With another writer a short sentence would probably be just a sentence; but with Cather every sentence implies much and many of them are fraught with meaning. We will quote a few of these short meaningful sentences.

> "Pavel and Peter drove into the village alone, and they had been alone ever since." (1)
>
> "Mrs. Wheeler and Mahailey always lost weight in thrashing, just as the horses did." (2)
>
> "I (Enid) never lose things on the train,--do you?' 'Sometimes,' he (Claude) replied guardedly, not looking up as he snapped the catch." (3)
>
> "Fr. Vaillant made no reply. He stood looking at the pages of his letter. The Bishop saw a drop of water splash down upon the violet script and spread. He turned quickly and went out through the arched doorway." (4)
>
> "He (Prof. St. Peter) thought he knew where he was, and that he could face with fortitude the 'Berengaria' and the future." (5)
>
> "A man, she (Mrs. St. Peter) knew, could get from his daughter a peculiar kind of hurt--one of the cruellest that flesh is heir to. Her heart ached for Godfrey." (6)
>
> "She (Mrs. Bergson) could still take some comfort in the world if she had bacon in the cave, glass jars on the shelves, and sheets in the press." (7)

(1) IV, p. 67 (2) V, p. 159 (3) V, p. 198
(4) IX, p. 256 (5) VII, p. 283 (6) VII, p. 155
(7) II, p. 30

"For Antonia and for me, this had been the road of Destiny; had taken us to those early accidents of fortune which predetermined for us all that can ever be." (1)

"At home the gooseberries are much larger and finer, but I (Auclair) have come to like this bitter taste." (2)

"Ah, monsieur, I (Saint-Vallier) shall not live in the episcopal palace again." (3)

"In the reorganization Henshawe was offered a small position which he indignantly refused--his wife wouldn't let him think of accepting it." (4)

"As we turned back to the sitting-room, grandfather looked at me searchingly. 'The prayers of all good people are good,' he said quietly." (5)

(1) IV, p. 419
(2) X, p. 23
(3) X, p. 273
(4) VIII, p. 75
(5) IV, p. 100

CHAPTER III

EMPHASIS OF VIVIFICATION ON STATIC NATURE AS CONTRASTED TO HUMAN NATURE

In all her novels Cather, undoubtedly because of her lack of a keen sense of the living present, shows a tendency to make inanimate objects--particularly those of nature--seem living things. At times they even seem more full of life than do some of her characters. The prairie in "O Pioneers!", "My Antonia" and the first part of "One of Ours" lives because, as Elizabeth Shipley Sergeant says, human beings behold it and covet it. (1) In fact the prairie may be regarded as the antagonist of these novels.

In "The Song of the Lark" static nature is somewhat vivified although it is not the hostile nature that we find in other of Cather's books. As Thea returned home after her first winter in Chicago she felt so glad that she was coming back to her own land, to the friendly soil of Colorado.

> "She had often heard Mrs. Kronborg say that she 'believed in immigration,' and so did Thea believe in it. This earth seemed to her young and fresh and kindly, a place where refugees from old, sad countries were given another chance. The mere absence of rocks gave the soil a kind of amiability and generosity, and the absence of natural boundaries gave the spirit a wider range. Wire fences might mark the end of a man's pasture, but they could not shut in his thoughts as mountains and forests can. It was over flat lands like this, stretching out to drink the sun, that the larks sang--and one's heart sang these, too. Thea was glad that this was her country, even if one did not learn to speak elegantly there. It was, somehow an honest country, and there was a new song in that blue air which had never been sung in the world before. It was hard to tell about it, for it had nothing to do with words; it was like the light of the desert at noon, or the smell of the sagebrush after rain; intangible but powerful. She had the sense of <u>going back to a friendly soil, whose friendship was somehow going to strengthen her; a naive, generous country that gave one its</u>

(1) See 12, p. 94

In all the [illegible] Indian, [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] of a [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

joyous force, its large-hearted, childlike power to love, just as it gave one its coarse, brilliant flowers." (1)

Static nature is not conspicuously vivified in "My Antonia" as in other of Cather's books. But there is enough of this vivification present to prove that Cather inclines toward it in her writing. (2)

In the novel we read that in that nearly desert country trees were regarded as persons.

> "Trees were so rare in that country, and they had to make such a hard fight to grow, that we used to feel anxious about them, and visit them as if they were persons."(3)

> "Antonia kept stopping to tell me about one tree and another. 'I love them as if they were people,' she said, rubbing her hand over the bark. 'There wasn't a tree here when we first came. We planted every one, and used to carry water for them, too--after we'd been working in the fields all day. Anton, he was a city man, and he used to get discouraged. But I couldn't feel so tired that I wouldn't fret about those trees when there was a dry time. They were on my mind like children.' " (4)

As a boy on the farm Jim very much admired the spirit which the men showed as they worked in the intense cold; too, he admired his grandmother's zest in keeping her family warm, comfortable and well-fed during the cold weather. He said: "I was convinced that man's strongest antagonist is the cold." (5) The description of the coming of spring on the prairie is noteworthy.

> "There was only--spring itself; the throb of it, the light restlessness, the vital essence of it everywhere; in the sky, in the swift clouds, in the pale sunshine, and in the warm, high wind--rising suddenly,

(1) III, pp. 219-20; See also The Ancient People, pp. 295-328
(2) See also IV, pp. 16, 266 (3) IV, p. 32
(4) IV, p. 383 (5) IV, p. 74

sinking suddenly, impulsive and playful like a big puppy that pawed you and then lay down to be petted. If I had been tossed down blindfold on that red prairie, I should have known that it was spring." (1)

In "One of Ours" Claude Wheeler in the first half of the book is not only sensitive to the people who are around him but also to the prairie. He feels just as out of tune with the prairie as he does with the people; hence the reader is inclined to feel that Cather has vivified the land. She speaks of the sun during harvest time as being like "a great visiting presence that stimulated and took its due from all animal energy." (2) After his marriage to Enid it seemed to Claude that Nature not only smiled but broadly laughed at him; this injured his pride very much. (3) For the little house that he had built for himself and Enid, Claude had intense affection until Enid failed to help him make of it a home; as the house was being built it had seemed a living thing, its growth symbolizing Claude's growing hope for the future. After Enid's departure for China, Claude envied this house for as several of the boys in the neighborhood were soon to be married it would straightway be lived in. Thus "the future of the house was safe. And he?--What was there to hope for now?" (4)

In general nature seems almost human in "A Lost Lady" but specific instances of its vivification are not many. The Nebraskan background gives to the book the air of space that it would otherwise lack. Capt. Forrester's marsh and grove were dear to the hearts of all gentle folk--they were symbolical of the better and higher things. How much pleasure the crude Ivy

(1) IV, p. 137 (2) V, p. 158 (3) See V, pp. 210-11
(4) V, p. 224; See also Ocean V, p. 293-319

Peters derived from hiring this marsh, draining it and planting wheat there. In so doing he felt that he was striking a blow at all good things. The description of dawn as Niel saw it on the marsh that fateful morning, when he went so early to call on Marian Forrester, is beautiful and seems to make of the daybreak a living thing.

> "The sky was burning with the soft pink and silver of a cloudless summer dawn. The heavy, bowed grasses splashed him to the knees. All over the marsh snow-on-the-mountain globed with dew, made cool sheets of silver, and the swamp milk-weed spread its flat, raspberry-coloured clusters. There was an almost religious purity about the fresh morning air, the tender sky, the grass and flowers with the sheen of early dew upon them. There was in all living things something limpid and joyous--like the wet morning call of the birds flying up through the unstained atmosphere. Out of the saffron east a thin yellow, wine-like sunshine began to gild the fragrant meadows and the glistening tops of the grove." (1)

In "The Professor's House" three of the outstanding examples of the vivification of static nature have to do with the Professor's life. Cather tells us that his walled-in French garden was the comfort of his life. There he worked when things were bothering him, and there he found comfort. During the summer months when his wife and daughters were in Colorado, beside tending his garden the Professor worked with his books and papers in the garden; there too he ate many of his meals. (2) Lake Michigan, the inland sea of his childhood, was very dear to St. Peter. These sentences give the Professor's feeling for the Lake:

> "But the great fact in life, the always possible

(1) VI, pp. 84-5
(2) See VII, pp. 14-16

> escapes from dullness, was the lake. The sun rose out of it, the day began there; it was like an open door that nobody could shut. The land and all its dreariness could never close in on you. You had only to look at the lake, and you knew you would soon be free. It was the first thing one saw in the morning, across the rugged cow pasture studded with shaggy pines, and it ran through the days like the weather, not a thing thought about, but a part of consciousness itself." (1)

St. Peter had accepted a professorship at Hamilton because the Nearness of Lake Michigan made it to him a place where one could live. Cather says: "The sight of it from his study window these many years had been of more assistance than all the convenient things he had done without would have been." (2)

Although the old house can hardly be considered a part of nature it was inanimate, and yet a living thing to St. Peter. In the house the third floor room, where he worked, was very life-giving to him. This room, scantily furnished, was the one that the Professor kept just as it had been, even after his family moved to the new house. For six weeks in every year Augusta, the sewing woman, used this room days, and so the forms for fitting dresses remained permanently there. For these "Forms" St.Peter developed such a deep feeling that he refused to let Augusta remove them when the family moved. (3) For Tom Outland and the Professor the mesa and its relics of a past civilization had a vital call. To them it was life. (4)

The vivification of static nature in "My Mortal Enemy" is apparent. Myra in speaking to Nellie said, "See the moon coming out, Nellie--behind the tower. It wakens the guilt in me." (5)

(1) VII, p. 30 (2) VII, p. 31; See also pp. 29-31
(3) See VII, pp. 16-29 (4) See VII, pp. 202-253
(5) VIII, p. 41

Again Nellie remembers as follows:

> "I sat down beside her, and we watched the sun dropping lower toward his final plunge into the Pacific. 'I'd love to see this place at dawn,' Myra said suddenly. 'That is always such a forgiving time. When that first cold, bright streak comes over the water, it's as if all our sins were pardoned; as if the sky leaned over the earth and kissed it and gave it absolution. You know how the great sinners always came home to die in some religious house, and the abbot or the abbess went out and received them with a kiss?'" (1)

In this last Myra seems to feel that the rising sun may take the place of an abbess in giving her a kiss of forgiveness before she dies. And in truth Myra did die alone, as she watched the rising sun.

New Mexico is the land of "Death Comes for the Archbishop." Fr. Latour, in time, truly loved the mesa country, particularly that between Laguna and Acoma. These rock mesas, Gothic in outline and resembling vast cathedrals, exerted an almost human influence over him. Cather speaks of this mesa as having the appearance of great antiquity, and of incompleteness. (2) His garden seemed like a friend to Fr. Latour so, although he had trained Tranquilino as a gardener, he worked on it planting and pruning, until he was too feeble to do any manual labor. Some very old tamarisks grew on the south, against the earth wall. Fr. Latour liked them because he said they appeared to be especially designed in shape and colour for the adobe village. But Fr. Vaillant loved the tamarisk because it had been the companion of all his wanderings, he called it the tree of the people and said it was like one of the family in every Mexican

(1) VIII, pp. 88-9
(2) See IX, pp. 95-98

household. (1)

There was something about the plains leading to Santa Fe that appealed strongly to one.

> "The plain was there, under one's feet, but what one saw when one looked about was that brilliant blue world of stinging air and moving cloud. Even the mountains were mere ant-hills under it. Elsewhere the sky is the roof of the world; but here the earth was the floor of the sky. The landscape one longed for when one was far away, the thing all about one, the world one actually lived in, was the sky, the sky!" (2)

There was in the Arroyo Hondo water which rushed up the side of the precipice like a thing alive. The Arroyo Hondo was particularly dear to Fr. Vaillant, and near this stream of water he always stopped to admire the "ever-ascending ladder of clear water, gurgling and clouding into silver as it climbed." (3) And May was to Fr. Vaillant one of the most important months of the year because of his life events which had occurred during that month. He felt that May was for a time lovely enough to be in truth the Bride of Christ, for then the sinful and sullied world puts on white as if to commemorate the Annunciation. (4)

In "Shadows on the Rock" several inanimate objects are so vivified that they seem more alive than do the characters. The forest on the opposite shore of the river from Quebec, stretching no living man knew how far, was suffocation and annihilation for European man. (5) Of this forest Cather says little in the book; yet the reader if he pauses may sense its brooding and somewhat hostile presence. The St. Lawrence River was a symbol of life to the early settlers of Quebec; yes, it was more than

(1) IX, pp. 200-1 (2) IX, pp. 234-5
(3) IX, pp. 166-7 (4) See IX, p. 204
(5) See X, pp. 6-7

that, it was a living thing to them. "The river was the one thing that lived, moved, glittered, changed,--a highway along which men could travel, taste the sun and open air, feel freedom join their fellows, reach the open sea--reach the world, even!" (1) Up this river every spring came the ships of which the people thought so much. In speaking of the ships which were expected that day Auclair said: "They will probably be old friends, that have come to us often before." (2) For hours and hours, almost the entire population of Quebec used to wait on the water front to see these first ships of the spring come in. On this particular day by sunset five vessels were anchored in the roadstead before Quebec.

> "Worn, battered old travellers they looked. It brought tears to the eyes to think how faithful they were, and how much they had endured and overcome in the years they had been beating back and forth between Canada and the Old World.---- The colonists loved the very shapes of those old ships." (3)

(1) X, p. 7 (2) X, p. 203
(3) X, pp. 208-9

CHAPTER IV

AVERSION FROM REALITY THROUGH CHOICE

The Changing Theme

It seems that Cather does not feel that she has chosen the themes of her various novels, rather she feels that she has accepted them. In "My Mortal Enemy" Myra Henshawe had a necklace of carved amethysts which she left to Nellie. This necklace Nellie kept, but she, quoting from the book, said:

> "I have still the string of amethysts, but they are unlucky. If I take them out of their box and wear them, I feel all evening a chill over my heart. Sometimes, when I have watched the bright beginning of a love story, when I have seen a common feeling exalted into beauty by imagination, generosity, and the flaming courage of youth, I have heard again that strange complaint breathed by a dying woman into the stillness of night, like a confession of the soul: 'Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy?'" (1)

Although Cather intends to keep herself out of her novels, in this statement she reveals her own attitude toward the theme of her novels. If this is true, then she regards each of her novels as a bead in a necklace which is to pay her debt not only to her Maker, but also to the peoples of prehistoric civilization. (2) Again in "The Professor's House" Cather reflects this attitude toward her novels as she describes Godfrey St. Peter's acceptance of the plan for his "Spanish Adventurers."

> "The design of his book unfolded in the air above him, just as definitely as the mountain ranges themselves. And the design was sound. He had accepted it as inevitable, had never meddled with it, and it had seen him through." (3)

Also, in the Preface to the 1922 Edition of "Alexander's Bridge" Cather expresses this same thought. (4) And in "The Novel Demeuble" she again speaks of accepting the themes of her novels. (5)

(1) VIII, pp. 121-2 (2) See pp. 18-19
(3) VII, p. 106 (4) See Ia, pp. VIII-IX
(5) See F. p. 6

There is a similarity in the themes which Cather has accepted for her novels, for in general the theme of all her novels is the living out of one's potentialities. For characters and setting to work out the themes of most of her novels Cather has drawn upon the expreiences and contacts of her girlhood which was spent in the Southwest, Cather herself says: "I have had nothing really new since that time (20 years old). Every story I have written since then has been a recollection of some childhood experience, of something that touched me while a youngster. You must know a subject as a child, before you ever had any idea of writing, to instill into it, in a story, the true feeling. After you grow up impressions don't come so easily. And it is for the purpose of recalling the old feelings I had in my youth that I come West every summer. The West has for me that something which excites me, and gives me what I want and need to write a story." (1)

"Alexander's Bridge" was Willa Cather's first attempt to treat a present day problem in a novel. To consider a problem of current interest was something she didn't want to do; she thought with pleasure of her early life in Nebraska and preferred to write about it, but she forced herself to write in the New England tradition thinking it the only thing to do. The theme of the book which is a man's futile attempt to live two lives is representative of the struggle which was going on in Cather's own mind, for she really desired to live in the past but was forcing herself to live in the present. Bartley Alexander found

(1) 11 , p. 261

himself unable to live up to his potentialities because of his divided allegiance; he wanted to be loyal to Winifred, his wife, and yet he longed for the vital life he could have with Hilda Burgoyne.

The central theme of "O Pioneers!" is a woman's struggle with the Nebraska prairie and life; she is victorious in the struggle with the prairie but life, she finds, holds too many unexpected turns to be easily conquered. Yet she finds happiness in marriage. Willa Cather enjoyed the struggle which Alexandria Bergson had in overcoming the soil, for to her it was as real as the struggles she as a girl had witnessed; in fact she was perfectly at home in working out a theme like this. Emil's love for Marie Shabata at times takes the story away from Alexandria, but in the end it is the calm and unemotional Alexandria who looks after everything. Her family proved undeserving of the sacrifices Alexandria had made for them and showed very little appreciation for what she had done. Nevertheless Carl Linstrum understood and came to make Alexandria his wife when he felt that she at last needed him.

The theme of "The Song of the Lark" is not a girl's struggle against the prairie. It is rather an artistic girl's struggle with herself and with the practical people who tried to influence her life. Thea Kronborg had an artistic nature which longed to express itself in music, but there were so many common every day things for her to do as a child that if it hadn't been for her mother, Dr. Archie, and Prof. Wuncsh she would not have

had any time for her music. Her brothers and sisters understood very imperfectly Thea's moods and aspirations, yet the matter-of-factness of her little brother Thor was always rather pleasing to Thea. Anna's religious fervor and interest in the common things of life had no such an effect on her. Aunt Tillie, Mr. Kronborg's sister, was very proud of Thea's musical ability; but of the family Mrs. Kronborg was the only one who really understood and helped her. Not only did Thea have to struggle with people but also with herself, for it was no easy task for her to master her voice. She had to sacrifice her life at home, several friendships and numerous pleasures in order that she might become a truly great singer. In many ways Thea's struggle to become an artist resembles Willa Cather's own struggle to become an artist.

The working out of destiny in the life of Antonia Shimerda is the theme of "My Antonia". Antonia offered little if any struggle; she submitted to fate in general, although in particular instances she was not lacking in courage to assert herself. She surely struggled to overcome the prairie and succeeded in so doing. Antonia herself said: "Father Kelly says everybody's put into this world for <u>something</u>, and I know what I've got to do." (1) And she did know what she had to do; she was to be a good mother not only to her first child but also to all the others that were to be hers. As we read in the last section of the book, "Cuzak's Boys," of Antonia's attitude toward her family, and theirs toward her we sense that destiny had been ful-

(1) IV, p. 363

filled in her. (1)

In "One of Ours" the theme is a boy's struggle to find his place in life. Surely Claude Wheeler didn't fit into the life of the Wheeler farm on Lovely Creek; even if most of his friends felt that the farm was the best place for him. Visiting friends like the Erlichs only made Claude more conscious that he was a misfit everywhere. And travel brought Claude no sense of realizing his dreams. Marriage to Enid Royce was a bitter disappointment. Enid's departure for China opened to Claude the way of release which was participation in the World War. As a lieutenant of the American Army in France Claude first learned how to live; from Gerald Gerhardt and the French people themselves he gained this knowledge of living. Thus not long before he was killed in action Claude Wheeler found his place in life. In "Critical Woodcuts" Stuart Sherman calls Cather's account of Claude's struggle to find his place in life an implicit satire on American manners and manhood in which the superior literacy, intellectuality, aesthetic interest, friendliness, affability and geniality of European, particularly German and French, men and women is exhibited. (2)

It is difficult to express the theme of "A Lost Lady" in words. To state it as the moral disintegration of a lovely woman is hardly fair to Marian Forrester. Henry Seidel Canby speaks of it as the mystery of character never quite revealed. He continues to say that the book treats of the mystery of that quality of beauty which flowers from the senses and can live

(1) IV, pp. 369-419
(2) 6

only when they are fed. (1) Of course Marian Forrester did in her way attempt to live out her potentialities; that is she endeavored to exert her personal charm which was her one and only talent. Stuart Sherman speaks, in "Critical Woodcuts," of the book as a poem of personality and its values--its too little regarded powers. Although Marian Forrester suffered sufficiently in the story to justify our idea of poetic justice, yet she lived the last days of her life surrounded by all the comforts that the money of Henry Collins, her husband, could buy. The reader is not disappointed at this ending of the story for after all he feels that Marian didn't deserve too harsh a fate.

The theme of the "Professor's House" is a bit hard to express, for it has to do with a man who has just passed middle age and his attitude toward life. The book itself portrays a cross section of Prof. Godfrey St. Peter's life as he stood on the threshhold of old age. The story is a study in introspection. Any struggle is all but lacking for St. Peter quietly made his choice. He no longer cared for vital living, he chose a quiet life so that he could recall the past while his family toured in France. In the end he decided to "live without delight" accepting the hardest facts of life as inevitable realities, neither good nor bad. (2)

The theme of "My Mortal Enemy" is the weak struggle of a woman whose environment is wrong to live out her potentialities. This time the struggle is really Myra Henshawe's ineffectual effort to overcome her mortal enemy--herself. This theme is an

(1) See A, p. 235
(2) C, p. 76

universal one for any person may be his own mortal enemy. Cather in this novel did not seem anxious to make the story of this struggle a vivid one, yet as Lee Wilson Dodd said it is a mystery story after all for it deals with that ultimate mystery which lies close and cold at the heart of every man and woman. (1) Myra had the courage to speak out very shortly before her death saying "Why must I die alone like this, alone with my mortal enemy?" (2) Each one of us must sooner or later feel that same way but only a few dare to voice the feeling as did Myra.

In "Death Comes for the Archbishop" all moral combat is lacking in the lives of the two main characters. Yes, moreover all the minor characters seem to be wholly good or wholly bad and well satisfied with their ways of living. So truthfully we may say that moral conflict doesn't enter the book save when Fr. Latour unseated Martinez and Lucro or brought Scales to justice. In these last two incidents right so <u>easily</u> conquered wrong that any feeling of conflict is really lacking. The two priests who put their faith to the test and made of it something real, tried to live out their potentialities as truly as did Antonia or Thea or Claude. Henry Van Dyke speaks of the theme of the book as "religion as adventure," thus he says it is what comes before death that gives it its significance. The theme of "Shadows on the Rock" is a very tranquil and peaceful one involving no moral struggle. The establishing of a bit of old France on the Rock of Quebec is the theme of the book. The emphasis is placed on the home and religious life of the common

(1) See G
(2) VIII, p. 113

people which becomes almost idyllic. In a letter to Gov. Cross, which was not intended for publication, Cather explains her purpose in selecting such a theme for her book. "Now it seemed to me that the mood of the misfits among the early settlers (and there were a good many) must have been just that. An orderly little French household that went on trying to live decently, just as ants begin to rebuild when you kick their house down, interests me more than Indian raids or the wild life in the forests. And, as you seem to recognize, once having adopted a tone so definite, once having taken your seat in the close air by the apothecary's fire, you can't explode into military glory, any more than you can pour champagne into a salad dressing. (I don't believe much in rules, but Stevenson laid down a good one when he said: 'You can't mix kinds.') And really, a new society begins with the salad dressing more than with the destruction of Indian villages. Those people brought a kind of French culture there and somehow kept it alive on that rock, sheltered it and tended it and on occasion died for it, as if it really were a sacred fire--and all this temperately and shrewdly, with emotion always tempered by good sense." (1) Auclair and Cecile succeeded in making a real French home in Quebec.

2.

The Changing Representative Characters

After the publication of "Alexander's Bridge" Cather contented herself with the portrayal of characters discovered by her during her girlhood. But in her treatment of these characters

(1) 8, p. 216

she was likely to cast a glamour over them just as, in "My Antonia," Francis Harling said Jim Burden did when talking about the country girls. So really as Cather wrote about these characters she was more a creator than a recorder. In her novels we find expressions of this dependance on the past for evoking both characters and events. The following is one of them:

"And the older we grow the more precious it (our youth) seems to us, and the more richly we can present that memory. When we've got it all out--the last, the finest thrill of it, the brightest hope of it--then we stop. We do nothing but repeat after that. The stream has reached the level of its source. That's our measure." (1) And so it is natural that realistically Cather should be at her best in the portrayal of such characters as Alexandria, Antonia, Thea, Claude, and Capt. Forrester whose prototypes she, as a girl, had known and understood.

In her article "The Daughter of the Frontier" Dorothy Canfield says that Cather regards the American people as a wife married against the wishes of her parents to a husband who is the new country, and she also says:

> "Is there one of Cather's novels which is not centered around the situation of a human being whose inherited traits come from centuries of European or English forebears, but who is set down in a new country to live a new life which is not European or English whatever else it may be? Isn't Miss Cather's chief interest what happens to him in this country, as opposed to what might have happened to him if his family had stayed on the other side of the Atlantic?" (2)

Some of these characters like Antonia, Cecile, and Alexandria

(1) III, pp. 460-1
(2) H, p. 7

are so successfully and happily married to the new country that we do not like to think of what might have happened had they lived in the Old World. But wouldn't Claude Wheeler, Myra Henshawe and Marian Forrester have been happier living in an entirely different environment? The reader may even believe that Cather intended for him to get this implied contrast.

These characters as presented by Willa Cather are three dimensional characters whose inner lives are often more important than are their outer lives. Of Cather's psychorealism as she portrays characters we will speak especially as we discuss Claude Wheeler, Jim Burden, Godfrey St. Peter, and Niel Herbert.

Bartley Alexander and Hilda Burgoyne are both the main and representative characters of "Alexander's Bridge." "No past, no future for Bartley; just the fiery moment--It was always Alexander's picture that the Sunday Supplement men wanted, because he looked as a tamer of rivers ought to look." (1) Alexander was a successful bridge builder who after an affair with Hilda Burgoyne had married Winifred, a very unemotional and dignified woman. As he grew older his love of life did not diminish, and although he continued to care for Winifred, he found that his life with her was not complete. After a chance meeting in London with Hilda Burgoyne, now a famous actress, Alexander began to live a double life because in his companionship with Hilda he found life. To Hilda as she herself said life seemed the strongest and most indestructable thing in the world.

After Alexander's marriage Hilda had made the stage her

(1) I, p. 387

life but with his reappearance years later her old affection for him returned stronger than ever. Yet, she had the strength to try to repel him but after finding that Alexander was determined to renew their intimacy she gave in to him. Later she showed her strength of character as she refused to let Alexander make her do that which he could not do.

Alexander could not solve his own problem but death came to his rescue and solved it for him, yet he drowned with a letter to Winifred that explained everything still in his pocket. Winifred never read this letter for the river that had taken Bartley from her had also taken it from her by making the writing illegible. We are dissatisfied with Bartley as a developing character and at the same time we enjoy his vitality and respect him because he couldn't live a double life. We sympathize with Hilda in her love for Bartley; we feel that she possessed an undying love of life.

The representative characters of "O Pioneers!" are very different from those of "Alexander's Bridge." Alexandria Bergson herself was typical of the unemotional pioneer daughter who through careful planning was able to conquer the prairie because she loved it and felt its very life. Carl Linstrum, Alexandria's true but passionless lover, never could feel the prairie; he should have been an artist. This bit of conversation between Alexandria and Carl gives one an insight into their lives and their attitude toward life:

"'You see,' Carl went on calmly, 'Measured by your standards here I'm a failure. I couldn't even buy one of your cornfields. I've enjoyed a great many things, but I've got nothing to show for it all.'

"'But you show for it yourself, Carl. I'd rather have had your freedom than my land.'

" Carl shook his head mournfully. 'Freedom often means that one isn't needed anywhere. Here you are an individual, you have a background of your own, you would be missed. But off there in the city there are thousands of rolling stones like me. We are all alike; we have no ties, we know nobody, we own nothing. When one of us dies, they scarcely know where to bury him.---All we have ever managed to do is to pay our rent, the exorbitant rent that one has to pay for a few square feet of space near the heart of things------'

"At last Alexandria said slowly, '----We pay high rent, too, though we pay differently. We grow hard and heavy here. We don't move lightly and easily as you do, and our minds get stiff. If the world were no wider than my cornfields, if there were not something beside this, I wouldn't feel that it was much worth while to work.----And it's what goes on in the world that reconciles me.'" (1)

Much as she loved Emil, her younger brother, she did not understand his passionate love for Marie because she never could experience it herself. "There was about Alexandria something of the impervious calm of the fatalist, always disconcerting to very young people, who cannot feel that the heart lives at all unless it is still at the mercy of storms; unless its strings can scream to the touch of pain." (2) Alexandria's love for Carl was almost entirely lacking in passion, only her dreams in which a strong lover lifted her bodily and carried her far away gave it an emotional aspect. Carl returned the love in the same way but was too proud to marry Alexandria until he was prosperous or until she needed him. It was Emil's tragic death

(1) II, pp. 122-4 (2)II, p. 226

that finally brought them together.

Marie Shabata was the character of the story who wanted to actually live; she valued Alexandria's friendship but she missed in her the emotion which she longed for. Years ago when she had run away with Frank Shabata to marry him, Marie had loved him, or rather had loved the man she thought he was. But ere long she had found he was not this man, then soon she had discovered she cared for Emil Bergson whom she had first seen as a small child. As their farms were near together they saw much of each other and came to depend too much on their visits together. Marie's eyes held in them her love for life, "sometimes they seemed like the sparks from a forge. She seemed so easily excited, to kindle with a fierce little flame if one but breathed upon her." (1) Like Helen of Troy, Marie's fatal beauty and charm did injury to many men and even caused the death of one. Yet could Marie be blamed for this? She was a very devout Catholic and got great consolation from the church. Emil Bergson, like Marie, possessed a love of life but without Marie everything seemed wrong. Twice he went away hoping to forget his love for Marie, but each time he found it impossible to forget. How he envied Amedee and Angelique their happiness--very skillfully does Cather present these characters and leave the reader to draw his own comparisons. Possibly, if Alexandria had only understood the lovers better their lives might have been different but she just couldn't understand their ardent natures. So, finally having decided to snatch at what happiness they

(1) II p. 136

could, Emil and Marie were lying together under the apple trees when Frank Shabata found them. He was so beside himself with rage that he shot and killed both of them.

Thea Kronborg, the main character of "The Song of the Lark" is representative of those people who not only possess artistic ability, but who also after a hard struggle achieve success in their chosen field of art. When she was a child Thea's fierce little mouth foretold her determination to accomplish whatever she started upon; and her brows so often drawn together indicated the defiance that she later was to feel for the rest of the world. But her delicate chin softened her face just as her love for music was to soften her whole life. Herr Wunsch, her first music teacher, often wondered why it was that he so believed in Thea. This answer which he gave to his own questions as aptly describes Thea the artist as Thea the child:

> "It was because she had both imagination and a stubborn will, curiously balancing and interpenetrating each other. There was something unconscious and unawakened about her, that tempted curiosity. She had a kind of seriousness that he had not met with in a pupil before. She hated difficult things, and yet she could never pass one by. They seemed to challenge her; she had no peace until she mastered them. She had the power to make a great effort, to lift a weight heavier than herself.---Yes, she was like a flower full of sun, but not the soft German flowers of his childhood.---She was like the yellow prickly-pear blossoms that open there in the desert; thornier and sturdier than the maiden flowers he remembered; not so sweet, but wonderful." (1)

Thea Kronborg loved life so much that when she came home after her first winter spent studying music in Chicago "her body had the elasticity that comes of being highly charged with

(1) III, p. 96

the desire to live. (1) All her life she had a peculiar way of expressing her feelings by the motions of her body. Oftentimes she drew her shoulders together to indicate her mood. Again it was her back that proclaimed her feelings. She herself felt the power of her body. "Her own body was always a cheerful sight to her. When she was careworn, when her mind felt old and tired, the freshness of her physical self, her long firm lines, the smoothness of her skin reassured her." (2) When Dr. Archie first saw Thea, the successful artist, he was not satisfied; but his second meeting with her reassured him. "Dr. Archie standing near her, was pleasantly aware of the animation of her figure. Under the clinging velvet, her body seemed independent and unsubdued." (3) But Thea was never sensuous; she had something within her that helped her live. When she went to Chicago for the first time Cather tells us of that which Thea had within her. "She was all there, and something else was there, too,--in her heart was it, or under her cheek? Anyhow, it was about her somewhere, that warm sureness, that sturdy little companion with whom she shared a secret." (4)

Thea's most cherished possession was her voice, so much did she think of this that at first she was loathe to share it even with Harsanyi. She could sing with and for people who were not artists because to them she didn't give of herself. Even Fred Ottenburg considered Thea's voice the personality which it was. Harsanyi in talking to Thea gave this explanation of her feeling for her voice. "You can sing for those people (people who were

(1) III, p. 224 (2) III, p. 428
(3) III, p. 432 (4) III, p. 157

not artists) because with them you do not commit yourself. But the reality, one cannot uncover that until one is sure. One can fail one's self, but one must not live to see that fail; better never reveal it. (1)

And Thea did fear failure. One night as she talked to Dr. Archie she very realistically spoke of this fear.

> "A light seemed to break upon her from far away--or perhaps from far within. She seemed to grow taller, like a scarf drawn out long; looked as if she were pursued and fleeing,--and yes, she looked tormented. It's easy to fail; he heard her say again, 'and if I fail, you'd better forget about me, for I'll be one of the worst women that ever lived. I'll be an awful woman!'" (2)

At times Thea felt that all things and all people were lined up against her trying to take away her inner feeling of surety, that sturdy little companion of hers. Then she would say to herself that people might trample her to death before she would ever cast that feeling away. Again she became so cynical that she was frightened. How she disliked many of the singers whose accompaniments she played in order to earn money to pay for her own lessons; none of them were true artists but yet the public seemed well satisfied with their singing. This made her dissatisfied with the public as well as with the so-called artists. Too, her boarding places never seemed to suit her and she quarreled with one landlady after another; with her fellow-boarders she was contemptuous. (3) In fact Thea often became so discouraged and afraid of failure that she wished she could be born again and begin life anew. When she confided in Harsanyi this feeling he said to her,"Every artist makes himself born.

(1) III, p. 211 (2) III, p. 244
(3) See III, pp. 257, 260

[illegible]

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(1) [illegible]
(2) [illegible]

It is very much harder than the other time, and longer. Your mother did not bring anything into the world to play the piano. That you must bring into the world yourself. (1)

So Thea continued her long hours of practice under various masters, always wanting to accomplish the seemingly impossible things. She said, "But it's silly to live at all for little things. Living's too much trouble unless one can get something big out of it." (2) But it was finally at Panther Canyon among the relics of a prehistoric people that Thea had her rebirth.(3)

> "It seemed to Thea that a certain understanding of those old people came up to her out of the rock shelf on which she lay; that certain feelings were transmitted to her, suggestions that were simple, insistent, and monotonous, like the beating of Indian drums. They were not expressible in words but seemed rather to translate themselves into attitudes of body, into degrees of muscular tension or relaxation; the naked strength of youth, sharp as the sun-shafts; the crouching timorousness of age, the sullenness of women who waited for their captors." (4)

Then Thea would say: "It's waking up every morning with the feeling that your life is your own, and your strength is your own, and your talent is your own; that you're all there, and there's no sag in you." (5)

Whatever passion Thea felt was not physical passion as far as Cather records or suggests it; rather it was passion for her career as a singer. As a singer Thea did succeed. With her, as with many men, love and marriage took second place. Her love for Fred Ottenburg was so passionless that it didn't seem real. And Fred himself was not passionately in love with Thea; (6) he realized that she was but using him as an instrument to aid

(1) III, pp. 175-6 (2) III, p. 245
(3) See pp. 18-19; 76; 140-2
(4) III, p. 303 (5) III, p. 318
(6) See pp. 77

[illegible]

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her in her career. Wasn't it merely gratitude mingled with interest that finally made Thea agree to marry Fred? For Dr. Archie Thea had an affection which was real, yes much more real than was her love for Fred. (1) Yet he too was often as an instrument which she used to further her career, as when she borrowed money from him to pay for her study in Germany. Spanish Johnny was the one individual to whom Thea gave friendship spontaneously, and from whom she expected nothing in return. They both loved music and that was enough.

Fred Ottenburg, the beer prince and Thea's passionless lover, is a character whom Cather intended the reader to find very real and vital. Evidently she intended him to be typical of the men who want to know life so that they may live; but she fails in so doing, particularly in his love relationship with Thea Kronborg. As Fred first appeared in the story he is thus described:

> "He had so many natural interests that he had no affectations. At Harvard he kept away from the aesthetic circle that had already discovered Francis Thompson. He liked no poetry but German poetry. Physical energy was the thing he was full to the brim of, and music was one of its natural forms of expression. He had a healthy love of sport and art, of eating and drinking." (2)

After he decided that she truly had talent Fred aided Thea in the development of her voice. First he introduced her to the Nathanmeyers who really knew and appreciated music. (3) Later he invited her to Panther Canyon for several months. As Fred talked to Thea of Panther Canyon his words did not ring true, the reader is ready to remark with Thea,"---It's too easy. Doesn't

(1) See pp. 78-80
(2) III, pp. 282-3
(3) See III, pp. 272-81

sound probable. I'm not used to getting things for nothing."(1) But Fred had this answer ready, "Oh if that's all, I'll show you how to begin. You won't get this for nothing, quite. I'll ask you to let me stop off and see you on my way to California." (2) So Thea went to Panther Canyon and Fred waited two months before he visited her there. When he did come he was not a passionate lover, rather he played well the role of the elder brother. (3) Rene Rapin says this of Fred the lover:

> "As a matter of fact he is as difficult to believe in as a lover as he is as a man. He is not a man. As undersexed as most of the heroes of contemporary novels are oversexed (and yet Willa Cather would have us imagine him a professional lady-killer!) to be credible he should be seventy." (4)

Coming directly after the Canyon Episode Fred's reminiscence of his early marriage to Edith Beers and of his present relationship with this wife is a decided shock to the reader; yet it makes his restraint with Thea seem at least plausible. Even then the brotherly Fred felt that he could do much for Thea. (5)

As the years went by Fred displayed no real passion for Thea; he continued to preserve that deep concern over her career and welfare that he had at first showed, but nothing more. (6) In the Epilogue Cather indirectly tells that Thea Kronborg and Fred Ottenburg have been married. But what has happened to Fred's first wife, she doesn't say; neither does she say why Thea at last decided to marry. Possibly Thea married Fred in payment for all that he had done for her. We surmise that Thea continued as an operatic singer and that marriage was secondary to a career for both of them. (7)

(1) III, p. 290 (2) III, p. 290 (3) III, pp. 309-29
(4) C, p. 39 (5) See III, p. 333
(6) See III, pp. 353-61, 367-72, 374-80, 431-44, 451-54, 462-68
(7) See III, pp. 484, 88

For Dr. Archie, the man of thirty, Thea the child of eleven had a friendship which was to last through the years. Although this friendship which was never sexual was not founded on conscious love, it was much more real than was Thea's love relationship with Fred Ottenburg. Dr. Archie is representative of the men who because of an unhappy home have to find pleasure elsewhere; often the friendship with a child brings such men true happiness.

When Thea was sore perplexed over anything she often went to Dr. Archie for advice. One day she was puzzled about the relationship between life in this world and the next; too the New Testament teachings about living bothered her. Dr. Archie told her that all religions are good but that he didn't see how people could live up to them in the sense she meant. He said:

> "I have thought about it a great deal, and I can't help feeling that while we are in this world we have to live for the best things of this world, and those things are material and positive. Now, most religions are passive, and they tell us chiefly what we should not do.--See here, my girl, take out the years of early childhood and the time we spend in sleep and dull old age, and we only have about twenty able, waking years. That's not long enough to get acquainted with half the fine things that have been done in the world, much less to do anything ourselves. I think we ought to keep the Commandments and help other people all we can; but the main thing is to live those twenty splendid years; <u>to do all we can and enjoy all we can</u>." (1)

In the last part of the last sentence we notice that Dr. Archie voiced his theory of vital living.

Dr. Archie it was who established Thea in Chicago when she first went there to study; later at Thea's request he met her in

(1) III, p. 138-9

New York and loaned her money for her first year's study in Germany. Never did he fail Thea when she needed a friend, and always she had the feeling that he believed in her. The very fact that Thea gave him her friendship was enough to make the doctor happy, he needed this happiness for his home life was most unsatisfactory. The woman whom he had married proved unworthy of his love, yet Dr. Archie was ever courteous not only to her but also when speaking about her. He enjoyed in Denver the society of women who as he said were kind to him .

Mrs. Archie's accidental death at last gave the Doctor his freedom. Then, as he had begun to receive a comfortable income from the mines in which he had invested, Dr. Archie went to Denver to live. There in his quiet apartment he enjoyed leisure and comfort such as he had never known. In fact he began to weild quite a bit of influence in the political world. Even then as he thought of life he felt that he was yet searching for something. But no matter how sad he felt over the tricks that life had played on him, the thought of his friendship with Thea always cheered him.

> "Wherever his life had touched Thea Kronborg's, there was still a little warmth left a sparkle. Their friendship seemed to run over those discontented years like a leafy pattern, still bright and fresh when the other patterns had faded into the dull background." (1)

And as he continued to reflect Dr. Archie came to the conclusion that the only satisfying things are those which meet an original want. We may even venture to accept this conclusion as Cather's own.

(1) III, p. 400

"The unexpected favors of fortune, no matter how dazzling, do not mean very much to us. They may excite or divert us for a time, but when we look back, the only things we cherish are those which in some way met our original want; the desire which formed in us in early youth, undirected, and of its own accord." (1)

The third character that we must study in order to understand Thea is Mrs. Kronborg, who was an unusual woman. She was the mother of seven children, yet she respected the individuality of each one. From her mother Thea received her musical talent, and to her she owed the fact that as a child she had taken lessons of Herr Wunsch who really knew music. In many ways Thea resembled her mother. "They both carried their heads like Indian women, with a kind of noble unconsciousness." (2) Mrs. Kronborg's face usually was serious as was Thea's, but hers was calm and satisfied as Thea's never was. Mrs. Kronborg was much more practical than was Thea and she managed her household duties very efficiently, although as she herself said she never let her house work drive her to death.

Just before her death Mrs. Kronborg talked with Dr. Archie about Thea and after she had voiced her hope that Thea would take her grandfather's oboe back to Sweden she said: "But I guess she'll take a <u>finer instrument</u> than that with her, back to Sweden." Then Cather continues:

"Her tone fairly startled the doctor, it was so vibrating with a fierce, defiant kind of pride he had heard so often in Thea's voice. He looked down wonderingly at his old friend and patient; after all, one never knew people to the core. Did she <u>within her hide some</u> of that <u>still passion</u> of <u>which her daughter was all-compact</u>?" (3)

(1) III, p. 401
(2) III, p. 121
(3) III, p. 407

Mrs. Kronborg just let herself die because she missed her husband so much; not even Thea's plea that she needed her made Mrs. Kronborg try to live. She realized that Thea was too interested in her work to mind her death keenly. Mrs. Kronborg did long to hear her daughter sing again, however much she had enjoyed her singing in the past.

> "I'd counted on hearing her sing again. But I always took my pleasures as they come. I always enjoyed her singing when she was here about the house. While she was practicing I often used to leave my work and sit down in a rocker and give myself up to it, the same as if I'd been at an entertainment.---And when she had the Mexicans over here, I always took it in. First and last I guess I got about as much out of Thea's voice as anybody will ever get." (1)

The last character we will discuss in order that we may better know Thea is Ray Kennedy. Ray was just an ordinary man who had worked out his own philosophy of life. He called himself a free thinker, yet his reasoning was faulty enough for him to believe himself damned for being one. Ray had had hard luck as a miner and rancher, then he had turned to railroading. While railroading he preferred to wear a jumper, and so stuck to the freight service. It was Ray's steady kindness that appealed to Thea; never did he even hint to her of his plans for the future nor did he allow himself to caress her. (2) One night as Thea and Ray talked Thea remarked that everybody either succeeds or fails <u>himself</u>. Then Ray voiced this homely bit of philosophy:

> "But when you look at it another way, there are a lot of halfway people in this world who help the winners win, and the failers fail.. If a man stumbles,

(1) III, p. 405
(2) See III, p. 109

> there's plenty of people to push him down. But if he's like 'the youth who bore' those same people are foreordained to help him along. They may hate to, worse than blazes, and they may do a lot of cussin' about it, but they have to help the winners and they can't dodge it. It's a natural law, like what keeps the big clock up there going, little wheels and big, and no mix-up." (1)

It was a very ordinary train wreck that caused Ray's death when Thea was hardly more than a child. Thea was with him for a bit before he died, then they actually knew each other.

> "The spark in his eye which is one's very self, caught the spark in hers that was herself, and for a moment they looked into each other's natures. Thea realized how good and how great he was, and he realized about her many things. When that elusive spark of personality retreated in each of them, Thea still saw in his wet eyes her own face, very small, but much prettier than the cracked glass at home had ever shown it." (2)

The dead Ray Kennedy was able to do more for Thea Kronborg, the artist-to-be, than the living Ray could ever have done. The money from his life insurance made it possible financially for Thea to study music in Chicago. And the memory of his trust and confidence in her helped Thea over many a hard place.

There are other characters who played their parts in making Thea a famous operatic singer; but we can only mention them. Herr Wunsch was the teacher who discovered Thea's real passion for music. The pianist, Andor Harsanyi, who is evidently Cather's ideal of a true music teacher and artist, discovered Thea's voice and then insisted she should study under a voice specialist. Bowers, the voice specialist, is introduced as direct contrast to Harsanyi. He, while he taught Thea the things she must know, was half envious and half sneering in his

(1) III, p. 123

(2) III, p. 148

conduct toward her.

H. L. Mencken says this of the characters in "My Antonia:"

> "I know of no novel that makes the remote folk of the western farmlands more real than "My Antonia" makes them, and I know of none that makes them seem better worth knowing." (1)

The writer agrees in part with Mencken's statement, but wonders if Cather who herself so enjoyed knowing Antonias in Nebraska has not cast an unusual glamour over the characters of this book.

Antonia represents the daughters of immigrants to Nebraska who often had to do a man's work and yet loved life and all that it held for them. One of the most real characters of the book is Antonia, she who "lent herself to immemorial attitudes which we recognize by instinct as universal and true. All the strong things of the heart came out in her body, that had been so tireless in serving generous emotions." (2) When the Shimerdas came to Nebraska from Bohemia Antonia was hardly more than a child. Yet during the summer which followed their first winter in Nebraska Antonia had to learn to do a man's work in the fields. Because she was strong and physically fit Antonia soon was able to do as much as, if not more than, any man. But in doing this work she lost all her nice ways she had acquired from her father, and in their place got rough ones. However her eyes never lost their love and credulousness and her voice remained husky and breathy. Antonia and Jim Burden became close friends, but their friendship was of the mind not of the flesh.

(1) 3, p. 29 (2) IV, p. 398

Not even once do we find either of them passionately caring for the other. (1)

Several years after Mr. Shimerda's death, Antonia went into Black Hawk village to work as a hired girl for Mrs. Harling. This was not a strange thing for the average older daughter of an immigrant family to do but it was an unnatural and strange thing for Antonia Shimerda, for as she herself later said "she belonged on a farm." (2) We can't reconcile the Antonia of Mrs. Harling's kitchen and of the dance pavillion to the Antonia of the prairie; hence we are puzzled that such an artist as Willa Cather should have Antonia spend these months in the village. Rene Rapin suggests that sentimental reasons prompted Cather to do this. (3) Just as she had mothered little Yulka at home so Antonia mothered the Harling children; early Antonia showed this passion for motherhood which was to be her <u>only passion</u>. In Antonia there was a vein of stubbornness which showed itself every now and then as it did when she left the Harlings and went to work for the Cutters. (4) Too when she once liked a person Antonia never would believe anything against him. (5)

This unchanging faith in people led Antonia to believe in Larry Donovan who was most unworthy of her faith and confidence. Antonia went to the city expecting to marry Donovan at once; there she lived with him for several weeks, all the time he kept putting off the date for their marriage until he finally disappeared. Then Antonia went back to the Shimerda Home and

(1) See pp. 39,40
(2) IV, p. 387 (3) See C pp. 49-50
(4) See IV, pp. 234-7 (5) IV, pp. 303-4

began to work in the fields again. All by herself she bore her first baby, a girl. In taking care of this baby Antonia spent much of her latent passion for mothering; she never was ashamed of this baby. The Widow Steaven thus describes Antonia the young mother:

> "She loved it (the baby) from the first as dearly as if she'd had a ring on her finger, and was never ashamed of it. It's a year and eight months old now, and no baby was ever better cared for. Antonia is a natural-born mother." (1)

Later Antonia married Anton Cuzak a slow and kindly man with whom she found life on the farm very pleasant and peaceful. By the time she was middle aged Antonia was the mother of about a dozen children and how she cared for each one of them, even if mischievous Leu was her favorite. When Jim Burden came to visit Antonia he was delighted with her family. He said: "In the group about Antonia I was conscious of a kind of physical harmony. They leaned this way and that, and were not afraid to touch each other." (2) Antonia herself, Jim Burden found unchanged in many ways. She still loved life which to her was motherhood. Yes, she had held on to the fire of life these years.

> "Whatever else was gone, Antonia had not lost the fire of life. Her skin, so brown and hardened, had not that look of flabbiness, as if the sap beneath it had been secretly drawn away." (3)

Now Antonia was not a person who lived merely a physical life, she lived a life of the mind as well. For the gentle life her father had lived in the Old Country she had a deep reverence. Years after her father's death Antonia said to Jim when he told

(1) IV, p. 359 (2) IV, p. 394
(3) IV, p. 379

her that he was going to New York City to live:

> "Of course it means you are going away from us for good. But that doesn't mean I'll lose you. Look at my papa here; he's been dead all these years and yet he is more real to me than almost anybody else. He never goes out of my life. I talk to him and consult him all the time. The older I grow, the better I know him and the more I understand him." (1)

And when Jim told Antonia that he would come back she said:

> "Perhaps you will. But even if you don't you're here, like my father. So I won't be lonesome." (2)

Antonia was not a complex character although she had a strong personality. In her natural habitat which was the country Antonia not only holds the attention of the reader but also arouses his emotions. She is a character worth knowing, a peasant Thea.

Jim Burden as a character offers a direct contrast to Antonia as a character. He never knew the actual joy of physical life. (3)

There are many other interesting characters in "My Antonia." Grandmother and Grandfather Burden seem very real to us. Mr. and Mrs. Shimerda offer a contrast to the Burdens: too Mr. Shimerda is gentle and a student while Mrs. Shimerda is a whining coarse peasant woman. Their son Ambrosch apart from his religion is a hard rough fellow. The two hired men Jake and Otto, "what unprotected faces they had; their very roughness and violence made them defenseless. These boys had no practical manner behind which they could retreat and hold people at a distance. They had only their hard fists to batter at the world, with."(4)

(1) IV, p. 362 (2) IV, p. 365
(3) For character sketch see pp. 111-115
(4) IV, p. 95

Mrs. Harling, with whom Antonia first lived in Black Hawk, loved living as well as did Antonia. The hired girls--the three Bohemian Marys, the Danish laundry girls, Tiny Soderball and Lena Lingard--are all so full of life.

Of Lena Lingard we will say just a bit for she offers such a contrast to Antonia. She had none of Antonia's natural mother instinct, she had had enough of home life as a young girl and she wanted a successful business career which she had. In the eyes of the world she was a success while Antonia was a failure; of course Lena's ideals were not considered so high as those of Antonia, but what of that. Boys liked Lena but they meant little to her aside from the good time she had with them. To her girl friends and mother Lena was most loyal, but with her business was business.

Almost every character in "One of Ours" is a representative character. Alexander Porterfield says that the characters have a disturbing actuality and that background is subordinated to character. (1) Of course Claude Wheeler (2) is the central character of the novel and as such he does not once lose his place. Both Mrs. Wheeler (3) and Enid Royce Wheeler (4) are more or less ascetic characters. Claude's brother Bayliss represents the shrewd, money-getting, fanatical young man of his time. His other brother, Ralph, is representative of the callous, prosperous farmers. And their father Nat Wheeler is representative of a group of rugged, intelligent, handsome men of the older generation who delighted in owning land and domineer-

(2) See B (2) For character sketch see pp. 115-119
(3) See pp. 162-3 (4) See p. 163-5

ing over their women folk. Gladys Farmer stands for the educated girls who cared for the finer things of life. Then there are the Erlichs and the Jouberts who really knew how to live.

And in Books Four and Five the reader meets men and boys representative of nearly all types of soldiers in the World War. Of all these we will only speak of David Gerhardt, the man whom Claude wished he might be. Lieutenant Gerhardt had been a well known violinist before the War. But because he hadn't felt that he was a good enough violinist to admit that he wasn't a man he had submitted to the draft. Soon after that his violin, a Stradivarius, had been smashed into a thousand pieces in an automobile accident; later he had become a fatalist because he had seen so many other beautiful old things smashed. (1) While talking with Claude one afternoon in the woods David revealed something of his beliefs. We will quote in part his answer to Claude's question as to whether or not he believed that they were going to get out of the war what they went in for.

> "Nothing we expect, but something unforeseen.--- I've sometimes wondered whether the young men of our time had to die to bring a new idea into the world. I'd like to know. I think I shall know. Since I've been over here this time, I've come to believe in immortality. Do you?
>
> "Oh, don't bother about it! If it comes to you, it comes. You don't have to go after it. I arrived at it in quite the same way I used to get things in art,--knowing them and living on them before I understood them. Such ideas used to seem childish to me." (2)

And in truth David had not only found his place in life but he had also done much to help Claude Wheeler in finding his.

(1) V, p. 407-9 (2) V, P. 409-10

The novel "A Lost Lady," is a portrait of Marian Forrester; most of the other characters of the book are introduced so that we may perceive the effect she has on each and the effect that each has on her. Niel Herbert, even as a small boy sensed that Marian Forrester was different from the other women of Sweet Water. Once, when Marian asked him how she seemed to him, Niel replied, "Lovely, just lovely." (1) One day as Niel watched the Swede farmer in his uncle's law office shuffle to his feet when Mrs. Forrester entered he observed as follows:

> "There could be no negative encounter, however slight, with Mrs. Forrester.---Something about her took hold of one in a flash; one became acutely conscious of her, of her fragility and grace, of her mouth which could say so much without words; of her eyes, lively, laughing, intimate, nearly always a little mocking." (2)

And as Niel knew she just couldn't help being interested in people; if she couldn't have fine people with her, then she made herself agreeable to the coarser ones. Because she was interested in people "the charm of her conversation was not so much in what she said, though she was often witty, but in the quick recognition of her eyes, in the living quality of her voice itself." (3)

That Marian Forrester's loveliness came from the senses was hard for Niel to believe as he grew older. But in the end he was forced to believe that sexual passion made her care for such men as Frank Ellinger and Ivy Peters. (4) Yet he found that hers was such a strange nature that she didn't admire men like those two if she did derive sensual pleasure from their

(1) VI, p. 39 (2) VI, p. 35
(3) VI, p. 70 (4) See p. 45

companionship. Too Marian Forrester was very dependent on money in order that she might be her lovely self. Niel dreaded poverty for her when he learned that Capt. Forrester had lost all his money for "She was one of the people who ought always to have money." (1) and Marian herself in speaking to Niel said: "Money is a very important thing. Realize that in the beginning; face it, and don't be ridiculous in the end, like so many of us." (2)

After the Captain's stroke which followed his loss of money Marian changed from a lovely vital being into an abstracted almost impersonal one. But the coming of a man like Cyrus Dalzell, president of the Colorado and Utah Railroad, to their home caused her to become for a time the lovely radiant Marian Forrester of old. Although Marian did not approve of women's smoking--she said men wanted women different, not like themselves--she indulged too frequently in drinking spirits. Not only her friends knew this but also the village women who explored the house while Marian was too dazed with sudden poverty and the captain's stroke to care what happened. To Marian in this condition came Ivy Peters with all his meanness and sensuousness; he formed a friendship with her based on physical passion and the rent money he paid for the marsh land. If she could have had her choice Marian would not have chosen Ivy for such a friend, but she must have somebody; and now that she was poor and in Sweet Water who was there besides him. Her friendship with Niel was not at all sensual so he was only

(1) VI, p. 83 (2) VI, p. 114

able to help her by caring for the crippled Captain.

After Capt. Forrester's death his wife became like a ship without a ballast. This came as a shock to everyone for apparently he had been a drag on Marian who was twenty-five years his junior. Sexual passion had been entirely lacking in their love for each other but the courtesy, generosity, and kindliness of Capt. Forrester had brought out the best in his wife, even while she enjoyed sensual pleasures with others. Before her husband's death while on a short vacation Marian had discovered, as she later told Niel, that she still had in her the power to live. (1) And after his death she lived so intensely with Ivy Peters and other common village boys that she was known in the village as the "Merry Widow." (2) How much vitality she wasted on these crude boys who knew nothing of the higher things of life because she preferred <u>living</u> on any terms!

At last chance took Marian Forrester away from Sweet Water. Soon she was married to a wealthy Englishman, Henry Collins, who was able to surround her with everything money could buy. True to her double nature to the last she sent word to Niel, the friend of her mind, that she loved him and often thought of him.

As we think of Marian Forrester we wonder what was wrong in her life that such a lovely woman could be so sensuous. The answer is that she never played her rightful role in life; Sweet Water was not her natural habitat. Capt. Forrester was

(1) VI, p. 125 (2) VI, p. 156

nobler than she, and Ivy Peters and Frank Ellinger were much coarser, so not one of them alone could bring out the best in her. Nor did Niel Herbert the idealist fit into her scheme of living. But for all four of these men she had a certain kind of affection, and in her own way she was loyal to them and to all men. She tried to please everybody, and in so doing developed no real stability of character. How interesting it would have been to have watched Marian Forrester develop her one talent, which was personal charm, in the proper environment.

Capt. Forrester, who to Niel and his uncle looked very much like pictures of Grover Cleveland, was a very different person from his wife.

> "He was a man who did not vary his formulae or his manners. He was no more mobile than his countenance.---His clumsy dignity covered a deep nature, and a conscience that had never been juggled with. His repose was like that of a mountain. When he laid his fleshy thick-fingered hand upon a frantic horse, an hysterical woman, an Irish workman out for blood, he brought them peace; something they could not resist. That had been the secret of his management of men. His sanity asked nothing, claimed nothing; it was so simple that it brought a hush over distracted creatures." (1) Yes, Capt.

Forrester was a real man, one of the most real that Cather has ever created. He alone of Cather's male characters is comparable to her female characters. To Niel the Captain, even after his death, not Marian seemed the reality.

The Captain was honored and respected by all who knew him. He was typical of his generation of frontier gentlemen who dared to actually live. To hear him give his toast of "Happy Days" in his grave and courteous manner was always a pleasure.

(1) VI, pp. 48-9

The episode of the closed bank proved that he was the soul of honor and thus worthy of the trust that the small depositors had in him. (1) Having lost not only his money but also his faith in mankind--no other director had been willing to give a cent to save the reputation of the bank-- the Captain proceeded to collapse. And from that time on he was but a wreck of his former self, although he recovered in part from his stroke. Now he walked leaning upon two canes, lifting his feet slowly and putting them down firmly and carefully. "He looked like an old tree walking." (2)

Capt. Forrester thought a great deal of Maidy, as he called his wife; but his was an affection from which all sexual passion was lacking. Not being able to express in words this affection the Captain had bought jewels for his wife. He believed that these jewels "must be costly" and that they must show that he was <u>able</u> to buy them and that she was worthy to wear them. (3) After his stroke every now and then he would call "Maidy" not expecting any answer, that she was there and heard him was enough. He knew Marian's weaknesses better than anybody else but as Niel Herbert observed, "The Captain knew his wife better than she knew herself; and knowing her, he, to use one of his own expressions--valued her." (4)

When Capt. Forrester died there died one of the last of that generation which had idealized the future of the frontier. As a boy he had been a driver for a freighting company that carried supplies across the plains from Nebraska City to Cherry

(1) See VI, pp. 90-93 (2) VI, p. 115
(3) See VI, p. 52 (4) VI, p. 143

Creek (Denver). Once when he had been driven out of the trail by a wash-out he had ridden south to explore. Then it was that he had first seen and loved the Sweet Water. All his life he liked to tell how at that time he had cut down a young willow tree and driven the stake into the ground to mark the spot where he wished to build a house. Years later he had come back and found his willow stake a tree; then giving his note to the railroad company he had bought the land. And twelve years after that he had returned a wealthy man with his bride to build a home on that very spot. (1) A few years before his death Capt. Forrester had expressed his philosophy of life to Niel in these words:

> "Well, then, my philosophy is that what you think of and plan for day by day, in spite of yourself, so to speak--you will get. You will get it more or less. That is, unless you are one of the people who get nothing in this world. There are such people----- If you are not one of those, you will accomplish what you dream of most.---Because a thing that is dreamed of in the way I mean is already an accomplished fact. All our great West has been developed from such dreams; the homesteader's and the prospector's and the contractor's. We dreamed the railroads across the mountains, just as I dreamed my place on the Sweet Water. All these things will be everyday facts to the coming generation, but to us-----" (2)

Very true was this last sentence of Capt. Forrester for his generation was followed by one composed of materialists who only cared for money no matter how they got it, they had no dreams. Ivy Peters was typical of this generation.

Ivy Peters was an ugly fellow who liked being ugly, says Willa Cather. As a boy he was mean and detestable but at the same time he was very shrewd. He poisoned dogs and even tor-

(1) See VI, pp. 52-55
(2) VI, pp. 54-5

tured helpless little birds by slitting their eyes. (1) Although the other boys despised "Poison" Ivy, as they called him, they were in a way fascinated by his arrogant and defiant bearing.

The man Ivy became a shyster lawyer who made money at the expense of the Indian or any other unsuspecting individual. After the Forresters lost their money Ivy rented their marsh land which had always been such a pretty, restful spot. He derived pleasure from converting this beautiful land into a common wheat field; for in so doing he obliterated a few acres of something he hated, though he could not name it. Too, he was pleased that he had asserted his power over the people who loved beauty for its own sake.

After Marian's lover married she turned to Ivy Peters for sensual pleasure. In no sense was Ivy Marian's equal; yet realizing this she allowed him to be her friend. (2) Ivy presumed upon his intimacy with Marian to a certain extent and after the Captain's death Ivy's name was everywhere coupled with hers.

In short Ivy Peters was typical of that generation which profited by the idealism of the preceding one. He cared nothing for the better things of life.

Niel Herbert who so admired the good in Marian and so disliked her sensuousness was a person who lived much in his mind. (3)

Frank Ellinger was a young man who was described as a terribly fast young man and a model son. This combination, Cather

(1) See VI, pp. 20-25 (2) See pp. 90
(3) For character sketch See pp. 119-125

said, pleased the taste of the time; and nobody thought the worse of him because of his wild ways. He was so full of life that "his whole figure seemed very much alive under his clothes, with a restless, muscular energy that had something of the cruelty of wild animals in it." (1) Niel didn't know what to think of Ellinger, he knew nothing bad about him but he felt something evil. This was the man who was Marian Forrester's lover and who later married Constance Ogden.

In "The Professor's House" the main representative character is a very different character from any that Cather had previously portrayed. Prof. Godfrey St. Peter was not young, neither was he at the time of our story filled with a desire to live. (2)

The Professor's wife Lillian was very different from her husband. (5)

> "Her nature was intense and positive; it was like a chiselled surface, a die, a stamp upon which he (St. Peter) could not be beaten out any longer. If her character were reduced to an heraldic device, it would be a hand (a beautiful hand) holding flaming arrows--the shafts of her violent loves and hates, her clear-cut ambitions." (3)

When St. Peter began to live more and more with his ideas and in the past, Lillian seemed to be launching into a new career.

> "Yes, with her sons-in-law she had begun the game of being a woman all over again---She was intensely interested in the success and happiness of these two young men, lived in their careers as she had once done in his. It was splendid, St. Peter told himself.---She was less intelligent and more sensible than he had thought her." (4)

Yet the Professor usually still relied on Lillian's judgment

(1) VI, p. 46 (2) For character sketch see pp. 125-30
(3) VII, pp. 274-5 (4) VII, p. 79
(5) See also pp. 125-7

when other people were concerned, for "her instincts about what one owed to other people were better than his." (1)

Rosamond and Kathleen, the two daughters of St. Peter, at the time of our story were jealous of each other. Rosamond was strikingly handsome, but she had such a hard core to her personality that she too often disregarded other people's feelings. Kathleen, who had a more intelligent and sensitive face than Rosamond, found life a bit hard and perplexing. Both had cared for Tom Outland, yet Rosamond was the one whom he had loved and the one to whom he had left his property. No one but her husband knew that Kathleen had ever had any affection for Outland. Married to Louie Marsellus Rosamond had become so used to wealth and prosperity that she was condescending to Kathleen who had married Scott McGregor, a poor man. Kathleen seemed to resent nearly everything that her sister did or said. It was Kathleen who more nearly understood the real Tom. In speaking of Tom to her father one day Kathleen said:

> "Now that Rosamond has Outland (the country estate) I consider Tom's mesa entirely my own. ----- And he's (Outland) all turned out dollars and cents hasn't he? But not for you and me! Our Tom is much nicer than theirs." (2)

Scott McGregor and Louie Marsellus were two very different men. McGregor as a boy had intended to do something very fine, but instead he was writing a daily prose poem and an "uplift" editorial for an ordinary paper. As Cather said, "His disappointed vanity ate away at his vitals like the Spartan boy's wolf, and only the deep lines in his young forehead and the

(1) VII, p. 151 (2) VII, pp. 131-2

twitching at the corners of his mouth showed that he suffered." (1) Tom Outland represented to McGregor an idea or an ideal, but to Marsellus he was as an older brother.

Louie Marsellus possessed practically all the characteristics of his race, yet there was nothing Semetic about his face save his nose which "grew out of his face with masterful strength, well rooted, like a vigorous oak-tree growing out of a hillside. Only his eyes, and his quick, impetuous movements, gave out the zest for life with which he was always bubbling." (2) As a business man Marsellus was a success as the Outland patent showed. As a student or scholar he knew his limitations and desired to better himself through St. Peter's influence. He genuinely admired the Professor yet he couldn't understand him. Neither could he understand Tom Outland whom he had never met. Both Louie and Rosamond were so lacking in fine sensitiveness that they named their country home Outland; they felt that they were in this way paying respect to Tom Outland's memory. In spite of his ability to make money Marsellus was fair and generous in most instances. St. Peter counted on his generosity more than he did on Rosamond's. With his wife he was most indulgent, paying but little attention to her fits of temper; in fact this and other characteristics made the Professor admire him, although his utter worldliness did at times disgust him. At one time St. Peter said to him, "Louie, you are magnanimous and magnificent." (3)

Rodney Blake was the materialist while Tom Outland was the

(1) VII, p. 73
(2) VII, p. 43
(3) VII, p. 170

idealist. Rodney and Tom had become friends because of a kindness Tom the Call-boy had done for him. (1) Tom Outland describes Blake as the sort of a fellow who can do anything for somebody else and nothing for himself. And for Tom Outland Blake did everything he knew how to do. But Blake was too much interested in present day affairs to be able to share Outland's feeling of reverence for the past. We read that "Blake was a conscientious reader of newspapers. He always wanted to know what was going on in the world, though most of it displeased him." (2)

While taking care of cattle Rodney and Outland discovered an ancient village of the Cliff-Dwellers. And how happy they both were as they excavated and explored that village. Later while Outland was in Washington, D. C. Blake sold all the things he and Tom had found in that village to a German for four thousand dollars, for as he told Outland he supposed he (Outland) had always intended to realize on the relics as he himself had. Blake believed that everything comes to money in the end. (3) Then Blake the materialist and Outland the idealist failed to understand each other, and so parted never to meet again.

In his way Tom Outland, the idealist, loved living just as much as did Rodney Blake; the materialist, but how differently he looked on life. Although Tom Outland is one of the most talked about characters in the story he never actually appears in it, in fact he has been dead some few years when the story opens. This gives the reader the feeling that Outland is not

(1) See VII, pp. 180-5 (2) VII, p. 187
(3) See VII, p. 244

real just as Cather intended it to; in truth he is a symbol of a quality which yet exists in human beings. Of Blake Outland thought very much yet he could never share his interest in material things. The ancient city which Outland discovered on the mesa and Blake helped him to explore and excavate became a symbol of the past to him. He idealized it until as Zona Gale says he developed a passion for the preservation of this heritage of a desert and of a dead people. (1) At Washington Outland filled with this passion found everyone so interested in the struggle for material success that they couldn't bother with his discovery. Then he returned to the mesa only to find that Blake had sold this heritage of the past for mere money. Of course Outland and Blake quarreled and Blake went away. Yes, Outland let Blake go but he said, "There was an ache in my arms to reach out and detain him, but there <u>was something else that made me absolutely</u> powerless to do so." (2) Outland spent the summer on the mesa happily reading the "Aeneid" and dreaming of the past. He didn't worry about Blake for as he said, "There are times when one's vitality is too high to be clouded, too elastic to stay down." (3)

Tom Outland never used the money Blake had received from the sale of the relics of the Cliff dwellers village and put in the bank for him, because it stood for that which had hurt him and always would hurt him so much. Yet as he grew older Outland realized what a friend Blake had been to him and that for his good Blake had sold the relics.

(1) J , p. 323 (2) VII, p. 247
(3) VII, p. 252

"But the older I grow, the more I understand what it was I did that night on the mesa. Anyone who requites faith and friendship as I did, will have to pay for it. I'm not very sanguine about good fortune for myself. I'll be called to account when I least expect it." (1)

By chance Outland entered Hamilton College. There Prof. St Peter became his friend, and at St. Peter's house Outland spent much time. To St. Peter Outland was not only an ideal student but also a symbol of his own youth. After his graduation from college Outland became an instructor in the college, and at the same time worked on experiments in physics which culminated in the discovery of a new gas. Then came the War, and with his old friend Father Duchene, Outland went to do his part which proved to be the sacrificing of his life.

After Outland's death Prof. St. Peter mused over his life wondering what would have happened had once the trap of worldly success been sprung on him.

"He couldn't see Tom building "Outland" or becoming a public-spirited citizen of Hamilton. What change would have come in his blue eye, in his fine long hand with the backspringing thumb, which had never handled things that were not the symbols of ideas? A hand like that, had he lived, must have been put to other uses. His fellow scientists, his wife, the town and State, would have required many duties of it. It would have had to write thousands of useless letters, frame thousands of false excuses. It would have had to 'manage' a great deal of money, to be the instrument of a woman who would grow always more exacting. He had escaped all that. He had made something new in the world--and the rewards, the meaningless conventional gestures, he had left to others." (2)

Zona Gale says this of Cather and Tom Outland:

"In him Miss Cather creates a living being, passionately pursuing an objective that has no personal taint. He expresses the love of the unknown which is

(1) VII, p. 253
(2) VII, pp. 260-1

basic hunger of the race. He has caught the 'Great Idea.'" (1)

Augusta, the sewing woman, is a character that must be spoken of for she is the forerunner of important characters of Cather's later books. "She was a reliable, methodical spinster, a German Catholic and very devout." (2) With Augusta St. Peter shared his upstairs study. (3) To St. Peter "she was like the taste of bitter herbs; she was the bloomless side of life that he had always run away from,--yet when he had to face it, he found that it wasn't altogether repugnant." (4) Augusta was very real, she regarded death and spoke of it as one would of a hard winter or a rainy March or any of the sadnesses of nature because for her death held no fear, (5) Augusta and Tom Outland together stood for the things in life which St. Peter at last knew to be always the same and lasting.

There are only two main characters in "My Mortal Enemy." Because there is very little character revealing dialogue in the story the reader from the printed page gets but a meager idea of the natures of Myra and Oswald Henshawe. Yet enough is suggested so that he may draw his own conclusions. To these two characters Cather was unable to give the life she had given to her pioneer characters whom she made to really live.

Myra Henshawe like Marian Forrester is representative of those people whose lives are frustrated because they are not allowed to live in their rightful environment. She was a proud impetuous, and dominating woman whose laugh could and did express so much. The girl, Myra Driscoll had been brought up amid

(1) J, p. 323 (2) VII, p. 16
(3) See pp. 54,129
(4) VII, p. 280 (5) See VII, p. 281

everything money could buy. She had had her own way until she had wanted to marry Oswald Henshawe; even then she had disobeyed her uncle and married Oswald. Because of the disobedience Driscoll left none of his money to Myra so she was dependent on her husband's salary for everything. For some time their income was sufficient for Myra to live comfortably, but even then she resented the fact that some had more than she had as the cab incident shows. One day Myra and Nellie were out driving in a hansom cab when a woman in her own carriage passed them, she waved to them, but Myra only bowed stiffly and said: "There, Nellie, that's the last woman I'd care to have splashing past me, and me in a hansom cab." (1) Myra thought a great deal of her friends and was able to make them more individual as she talked about them; yet when one of these friends didn't live up to what she expected of him, the very mention of his name or the sight of him made her bitter.

As time went on Myra came to dislike the husband she had once cared so much for; no longer did she think of him as the ideal lover and husband of her youth. And as they grew poorer she came to realize that she had done wrong in marrying Oswald, for in her heart she had never given up the fortune that should have been hers. Lee Wilson Dodd says:

> "Myra, dying and tragically frustrated knows that in her heart she has never renounced the great fortune that might have been hers. It was not in her really to renounce it, all that it must have meant to her; and this failure has poisoned her whole life, as well as her husbands." (2)

Never did Oswald's devotion to and love for Myra flag; yet he

(1) VIII, p. 52; See also VIII, pp. 83, 104-5
(2) G, p. 234; also VIII, pp. 90-1

felt it deeply that she blamed him for separating her from the Catholic Church, for he had never meant to do that. Myra's was in truth a frustrated life; and she realized that she had never actually lived as her remarks about her uncle's intense love or hate show.

As an old woman Myra looked like one who hated life for its defeats, and loved it for its absurdities. She died alone with her mortal enemy (herself) on a cliff overlooking the ocean; the rising sun was her only companion. (1) So strong was her will power that ill as she was she had dressed herself, summoned a cab, and had herself left on the lonely cliff where she told the cabman a friend was coming to meet her. What kind of a woman would Myra have been in her proper environment we wonder. Surely her complex nature would have made her an outstanding woman.

Oswald Henshawe is the typical laconic and retiring husband of a dominating, impetuous woman like Myra. These sentences of Nellie's well describe him:

> "I wondered---at the contradictions in his face: the strong bones, and the curiously shaped eyes <u>without any fire in them</u>. I felt that his life had <u>not suited him; that he</u> possessed some kind of courage and force which slept, which in another sort of world might have asserted themselves brilliantly. I thought he ought to have been a soldier or an explorer." (2)

But Myra crushed in Oswald all his potential love of life by dominating him completely. This fact is implied in this sentence: "In the reorganization Henshawe was offered a small position, which he indignantly refused--<u>his wife wouldn't let him</u>

(1) See p. 55
(2) VIII, pp. 65-6

think of accepting it. (1) With a woman like the little newspaper reporter Oswald was a different man; "She took correction well," (2) he told Nellie. No longer was he apologetic when in the company of people like this girl to whom he could give directions.

His wife called Oswald a sentimentalist, for she said he could look back on the days when they were young and loved each other, and make himself believe that it was all like that. And she blamed herself for the change that had come over him saying, "Perhaps I can't forgive him for the harm I did him. Perhaps that's it." (3) Never would Oswald admit to Nellie Myra's unpleasantness; for to him she was just Molly Driscoll, his youthful sweetheart.

Nellie Birdseye, the young girl, is worthy of mention only because she is the narrator of the story. Cather has made Nellie an absolutely characterless individual.

In "Death Comes For the Archbishop" character is simplified. The two priests, Fr. Latour and Fr. Vaillant (4) are much less real than are their careers. The minor characters of this book are truly representative each of his own group. There is Martinez, the native priest and man of the old order, who is most licentious. (5) Father Jesus de Baca is representative of a smaller group of native priests who are true to all the teachings of the church thus winning the confidence of the Indians. (6) And there are the Olivares: Don Antonio, the typical better class Mexican gentleman; his wife Dona Isabella, the true

(1) VIII, p. 75 (2) VIII, p. 108 (3) VIII, p. 105
(4) For character sketches see pp. 165-73
(5) IX, pp. 139-58, 160-4
(6) IX, pp. 83-7, 104

Kentuckian lady and devout Catholic; and Senorita Inez whose life was that of a nun although she had not taken the veil. (1) Magdalena is representative of the Mexican girls who think it an honor to marry an American, no matter what his morals are--Magdalena finally finds peace in serving her church. (2) Christobal Carson is the American scout who could read a landscape or a human face, but not a printed page. He had a clean sense of honor and a compassionate heart, yet he did not share the Bishop's respect for the Indians, rather he took part in wars against them. His little Mexican wife was in her way worthy of Carson. (3) Eusabio and Jacinto are typical of the finer Indians. (4)

The characters of "Shadows On the Rock" are not at all real although their portrayal is most artistic. Euclide Auclair and his daughter Cecile are characters representative of those French settlers in Quebec who did their utmost to establish in the new country homes like those they had left in France. They engaged in no strife with the Indians, neither did they attempt to become powerful or wealthy. No moral struggle took place in their lives; it always seemed the natural thing for them to do right.

Cecile Auclair seemed almost too good to live, as the saying goes. In her there was none of Helen's love of living the life of this world. At the time of our story she was, although only twelve years old, her father's housekeeper and home maker. Her mother before her death had instructed Cecile in the art of housekeeping so that the home might continue to be like the one they had left in France. And so faithfully had Cecile followed

(1) IX, pp. 175-197 (2) IX, pp. 67-76, 78-9, 209-11
(3) IX, pp. 75-8 (4) IX, pp. 122-34, 221-38, 294-5

these instructions that Cather says:

> "The individuality, the character, of M. Auclair's house, though it appeared to be made up of wood and cloth and glass and a little silver, was really made of very fine moral qualities in two women: the mother's unswerving fidelity to certain traditions, and the daughter's loyalty to her mother's wish." (1)

This parting remark of Cecile to her father before she started on her trip to the Ile d'Orleans was typical of Cecile the housewife, "Papa, you will not forget to keep the fire under the soup? It has been on only an hour." (2)

Cecile possessed a silver cup with her name engraved upon it which little Jacques cared very much for. This cup had been given her for her very own by Aunt Clothilde years ago. And so it symbolized to Jacques everything in life that he did not have. Cecile thought a lot of Jacques who spent much time at her house. His mother, a woman of bad character, bothered very little with Jacques, but Cecile and her father did much to make him a good little citizen religious and helpful.

Cecile herself was very religious. Her faith was that of a little child; her implicit belief in the teachings of the Catholic church is beautiful. She never tired of hearing stories of the lives of the early saints and martyrs. (3) She loved many of the sisters of the Quebec convents. But her reading with her father kept her from desiring to lead an ascetic life herself. Like a good many of the other people Cecile believed in miracles and had it not been for her father's good sense she would have spent too much time in pondering over past and present miracles. Particularly did she enjoy hearing the stories of Jeanne Le Ber's

(1) X, pp. 25-26 (2) X, p. 186
(3) See p. 153

ascetic life; and for days she would muse over these stories.

It seems that Pierre Charon who had once cared for Jeanne Le Ber was at the time of our story in love with Cecile. Apparently because of her youth Pierre, who was older than Cecile, assumed a big brother attitude toward her. Perhaps Cecile was too young to show any passion for Pierre, anyway their love affair, if it may be called such, was very unreal. Cather tells us that Pierre's daring and pride made him seem to Cecile even more splendid than Count Frontenac. Too, she says that Cecile regarded him as a friend, devoted and fearless who was one of themselves. (1) But we are told in the Epilogue--fifteen years later than main story--that Cecile is married to Pierre and the mother of four sons.

Cecile's love for Quebec was much more real than was her love for Pierre. When she thought she must leave Quebec and return with her father to France she felt very badly. She even wished that she could be left behind and like the furniture be scattered among the neighbors. She confided in Jacques that she would rather go into the forests of the Huron country to find the places where the martyrs had died than go anywhere else. But the Count's untimely death kept both Cecile and her father in Quebec.

Cecile's father, Euclide Auclair, was not of the proper stuff for a colonist, and he knew it. (2) Except for his lively and inquiring glance everything about him was modest and retiring. Auclair had come to Quebec with Count Frontenac as his

(1) X, p. 268 (2) X, p. 7

personal physician. In Quebec Euclide Auclair and his wife had tried to extablish a home exactly like the one they had left in Paris. Tranquility was the most important thing of this household according to Auclair. His dinner which he and Cecile, unlike their neighbors, had at night he said kept him a civilized man. After this dinner in the long evenings he corrected Cecile's accent as she read aloud to him. (1)

Auclair had been glad to leave Paris because of the suffering of the poor people living near him--his mind was free hence he could not be insensible to these wrongs. Beside attending the Count he kept an apothecary shop and doctored other people. But, as Cecile realized after the Count's death, the Count was the reason for nearly everything Auclair did. In the Count, Auclair found the qualities he lacked himself but most admired in other men. And so deeply did he care for his patron that after his death Auclair said, "I do not wish to outlive my time." (2)

As an apothecary Auclair had many ideas that made him different from other apothecaries of his time. He did not believe in bleeding as a remedy for all ills, and in truth he made many enemies by his outspoken statements about this bleeding. As he talked with Bishop Saint-Vallier about Bishop de Laval's health he expressed Cather's own belief when he said, "Change is not always progress." (3) Once he told Cecile that medicine was a dark science (4) and in this dark science he worked out his own prescriptions never blindly following the popular fancy.

(1) X, pp. 157, 16, 17 (2) X, p. 261
(3) X, p. 119 (4) X, p. 212

Pierre Charron, who was Cecile's lover, was a hero of the fur trade and the coureurs de bois. He was of medium height, quick as an otter and always sure of himself. (1) Of all the characters in the book Pierre is the only one who is anything of a realist; and he is only a potential realist for the characteristics which would have made him a realist in a different environment are not allowed to predominate. His sparkling hazel eyes had a kind of a living flash in them. He was relentless when he hated, but his goods and his very life were at the disposal of the person he loved or the leader he admired. (2)

> "For him the family was the first and final thing in the human lot; and it was so engrafted with religion that he could only say: 'Very well: religion for the fireside, freedom for the woods.'" (3)

And Pierre liked Canada as well as did Cecile; he said, "I wouldn't like a country where things were too soft. I like a cold winter and a hot summer. (4)

As we have stated in an earlier paragraph Pierre's attitude toward Cecile was that of a devoted big brother rather than that of a lover. Thus there seems to be no physical passion in his love for her. But in him there was none of the ascetic as is shown in his attitude toward Jeanne Le Ber. (6)

Jeanne Le Ber (5) is the ascetic who so influenced the lives of many people by the mortification of her own flesh.

a.

Psychorealism In Cather's Treatment Of Character

As we have said before, nearly all of Cather's characters

(1) X, p. 170 (2) X, p. 172
(3) X, pp. 174-5 (4) X, p. 188
(5) For character sketch see pp. 175-9
(6) See pp. 177-8

are three dimensional. From these characters we have selected four who seem to have unusually clearly defined inner lives so that we may make clear Cather's use of psychorealism. As she very plainly expresses in her novels Cather believes that all life comes from within.

> "Life rushed in upon her through that window--or so it seemed. In reality of course, life rushes from within, not from without. There is no work of art so big or so beautiful that it was not once all contained in some youthful body." (1)

In truth, the entire novel "My Antonia" Cather offers as a result of Jim Burden's inner living; for everything told in it had become a part of his thought life long before it was recorded. Jim Burden tells the story in the first person.

> "Of course, I should have to do it in a direct way, and say a great deal about myself. It's through myself that I knew and felt her, and I've had no practice in any other form of presentation." (2)

This quotation explains the significance of the title "My Antonia" as well as his reason for telling the story in the first person.

Jim Burden, now an orphan, and the Shimerdas reached Black Hawk on the same train but in different cars. On his long ride to his grandfather's farm Jim had plenty of time to think, for the jolting of the wagon kept him from sleeping. These are some of the small boy's musings:

> "I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man's jurisdiction.---I did not believe that my dead father and mother were watching me from up there; they would still be looking for me at the sheep-fold down by the creek, or along the white road that led to the mountain pastures. I had left

(1) III, p. 140 See also pp. 173-4
(2) IV, p. XIII

> even their spirits behind me.---I did not say my prayers that night: here, I felt, what would be would be." (1)

Three days after Jim's arrival at the farm the Burdens rode over to call on the Shimerdas; during that call began the friendship between Jim and Antonia which was always to be a friendship of the mind. Much as Jim liked Antonia he resented the protecting manner and the superior tone that she sometimes assumed when with him--Antonia was four years older than Jim. But their adventure in which Jim killed a rattlesnake (2) caused her to respect him now not only as a student but also as a boy.

Mr. Shimerda's suicidal death (3) which occurred the winter after their coming to Nebraska made a deep impression on Jim. While the older members of the family went to help the Shimerdas, Jim sat thoughtful at home. As he thought of Mr. Shimerda's soul, Jim came to feel that, if it were lingering about in this world at all, it was probably right there in the Burden's house which had been so much to his liking.

> "I knew it was homesickness that had killed Mr. Shimerda, and I wondered whether his released spirit would not eventually find its way back to his own country. I thought of how far it was to Chicago, and then to Virginia, to Baltimore,--and then the great wintry ocean. No, he would not at once set out upon that long journey. Surely, his exhausted spirit, so tired of cold and crowding and the struggle with the ever-falling snow, was resting now in this quiet house." (4)

The spring after her father's death Antonia was so busy working in the fields that Jim saw but little of her. When he did see her sunburned, sweaty, her dress open at the neck and her throat and chest dust-plastered; he thought of the tone in which Mr.

(1) IV, p. 8 (2) IV, pp. 48-56
(3) See pp. 21-2; 150-1
(4) IV, pp. 115-16

Shimerda had expressed so much when he simply said, "My Antonia!" (1)

After the Burden's removal to the village of Black Hawk Jim thought that he had become quite another boy with a great deal to learn. Even in town Jim had many lonely hours for he could not frequent the bar-room and places of amusement as could the boys who had nothing to live up to. Some evenings he walked up and down the streets scowling at the little sleeping houses on either side. Over the houses and their occupants he mused much.

> "They were flimsy shelters, most of them poorly built of light wood. Yet for all their frailness, how much jealousy and envy and unhappiness some of them managed to contain! The life that went on in them seemed to me made up of evasions and negations.--- The people asleep in those houses, I thought, tried to live like the mice in their own kitchens; to make no noise, to leave no trace, to slip over the surface of things in the dark." (2)

And Jim resented the attitude of the town people toward the Bohemian and Scandinavian girls who had come to town to serve as hired girls. He felt that these girls were just as good as the daughters of American born farmers and should be treated as their equals.

While he was a student at the University Jim was introduced to the world of ideas by Gaston Cleric.

> "Gaston Cleric introduced me to the world of ideas; when one first enters that world everything else fades for a time, and all that went before is as if it had not been. Yet I found curious survivals; some of the figures of my old life seemed to be waiting for me in the new." (3)

To the old friends and places Jim begrudged a place in the new life he was trying to live, and yet they persisted in remaining

(1) IV, p. 139-44 (2) IV, pp. 249-50
(3) IV, p. 292

with him.

> "But whenever my consciousness was quickened, all those early friends were quickened within it, and in some strange way they accompanied me through all my new experiences. They were so much alive in me that I scarcely stopped to wonder whether they were alive anywhere else, or how." (1)

Also, while at the University Burden, through his association with Lena Lingard, came to understand clearly for the first time the relation between attractive girls and poetry like that of Virgil. (2)

Before Jim Burden went to New York City to enter a law office he had a long conversation with Antonia. (3) Yes, all during the years these two had clung to their friendship, but neither had ever been a passionate lover of the other. In the course of their talk together Jim revealed to Antonia his inner feeling for her.

> "I'd have liked to have you for a sweetheart, or a wife, or my mother or my sister--anything that a woman can be to a man. The <u>idea</u> of you is a <u>part of my mind</u>; you influence my <u>likes</u> and dislikes, all <u>my tastes</u>, hundreds of times when I don't realize it. <u>You</u> really <u>are</u> a <u>part of me</u>." (4)

When Antonia and Jim parted, he walked back over the familiar road almost believing that "A boy and girl ran along beside him as their shadows used to do, laughing and whispering to each other in the grass." (5)

Twenty years later Jim Burden came back to see Antonia. (6) As he watched Antonia with her family Jim realized how bare his own life really was--Burden had never married. The reader becomes very conscious of the bareness of Jim's life as he reads

(1) IV, p. 297 (2) See pp. 306, IV
(3) See pp. 85-6
(4) IV, p. 363 (5) IV, p. 365
(6) See p. 85

of his interest in the Cuzak family. But as Jim Burden walked about the town after he had said good-bye to Antonia and her family he felt somewhat cheered, he says:

> "My mind was full of pleasant things; trips I meant to take with the Cuzak boys, in the Bad Lands and up on the Stinking Water. There were enough Cuzaks to play with for a long while yet. Even after the boys grew up, there would always be Cuzak himself! I meant to tramp along a few miles of lighted streets with Cuzak." (1)

Evidently Jim Burden was to know real living only through his association with Antonia Cuzak's family. His own life was always to be one of the mind.

In Claude Wheeler Cather surely presents to us a three dimensional character. This Claude Wheeler, whom Rene Rapin calls one of Cather's most outstanding characters, is representative of all American youth who strive to find their places in life; and so he is "one of ours." (2) Claude himself with his splendid physique and thick red hair gives the impression of reality. As a youngster while he developed his body, he at the same time began to develop a thought life. Almost as far back as he could remember he had "the conviction that there was something splendid about life, if he could only find it." (3) And how hard it was for him to find that something splendid, for birth had not provided him with the right environment. Of all his family his mother was the only one who even in part understood him, and she couldn't help him. So we follow Claude as he tried to find himself in religion, in school, in farming, in marriage and in the World War.

(1) IV, pp. 417-18 (2) Cf. C, p. 66
(3) V, p. 103

When Claude was about fifteen years old he thought a great deal concerning religion. He decided that he couldn't repent and become converted until he knew more of the world, because he hated the meek way in which the young men of the prayer meeting accepted permitted pleasures. Then it was that he had a sharp physical fear of death. Many nights he lay awake trying to make some plan to escape death, angrily wishing that he had not been born. "Was there no way out of the world but this?--- There had never been a man so strong or so good that he had escaped. And yet he sometimes felt sure that he, Claude Wheeler, would escape; that he would actually invent some clever shift to save himself from dissolution. When he found it, he would tell nobody; he would be crafty and secret." (1) When Claude was old enough his father sent him to a narrow denominational college where a boy like him just couldn't find his place in life. He wasn't sure enough of himself to assert himself and so he had to continue to suffer mentally. He knew himself that he should go to the State University; yet rather than be the subject of his father's jokes he meekly accepted the decision that he go to Temple College. But from a course in European History which he took at the State University he did feel that he was getting something vital. And from the friendship with Julius Erlich who sat next to him in the history class he got a taste of real living. Happy were the hours he spent with the Erlichs, all of whom seemed to really know how to live. But just as Claude was beginning to find out about life from these new friends he had

(1) V, p. 49-50

to leave college and turn to farming.

On the farm he tried his best to find himself, but he couldn't. The hired man once told him that his father's fields would always lie between him and trouble. As Claude thought that over he decided there was a good deal of truth to the statement.

> "Yet, as for him, he often felt that he would rather go out into the world and earn his bread among strangers than sweat under this half-responsibility for acres and crops that were not his own. He knew that his father was sometimes called a 'land hog' by the country people, and he himself had begun to feel that it was not right they should have so much land,--to farm, or to rent, or to leave idle, as they chose. It was strange that in all the centuries the world had been going, the question of property had not been better adjusted. The people who had it were slaves to it, and the people who didn't have it were slaves to them." (1)

In a way his life on the farm was responsible for his marriage to Enid Royce whom he had known since childhood. (2)

Before he was married Claude thought he surely would find himself in his life with Enid. As he told Enid before they were married he felt he must be good for something but he added "When I lie still and think, I wonder whether my life has been happening to me or to somebody else. It doesn't seem to have much connection with me. I haven't made much of a start." (3) However on the very first day of their married life Enid very plainly showed that she intended to selfishly live her own life.(4) Claude sensed then that never would his marriage to Enid help him to find his place in life. Yet he hoped for happiness. As the months passed Claude grew more unhappy for Enid's chief interest lay in the Prohibition cause; but no one could say that

(1) V, p. 80 (2) See V, p. 137-43
(3) V, p. 143 (4) See p. 164

she neglected her house even if she did fail Claude. Finally Enid's decision to go to her sister Carrie in China changed everything for Claude who now felt he had made a mess of one more thing.

> "He felt that "his life was choking him, and he hadn't the courage to break with it.----- What a hideous world to be born into! Or was it hideous only for him? Everything he touched went wrong under his hand--always had." (1)

He even longed to go to sleep like the fields under a blanket of snow and to wake only when his hurts were healed and his defeats forgotten. (2) After Enid's departure, as Claude closed the little house, he had thought so much of, he felt very sad for what could life hold for him. (3)

Then along came the World War and the United States' participation in it. Claude enlisted and soon was on the boat "Anchises" crossing the Atlantic. He felt that he was beginning life where his childhood had left off and he was so glad to be free of the events of the intervening years. In fact life had never seemed so tempting to him as it did then for he could truly say, "I am all here. I've left everything behind me." (4) In France as a soldier Claude did find his place in life. David Gerhardt, the Jouberts, the Fleurys and others all helped him so much in his quest. He believed that he and his men were taking part in a great struggle which would better the world; but above all he knew that he was living with people who felt the better things of life. He became a man of decision, a man who dared to do. (5) Claude was killed in action, but before he died he had

(1) V, p. 220 (2) See V, p. 223 (3) See p. 52 (4) V, p. 311
(5) See incident of German officer V, p. 430-2
and Snout incident V, p. 449-54

time to think of but one thing and that was that he commanded wonderful men who were mortal but unconquerable. (1) Cather would have us believe that it was best for Claude to die before he should have been disillusioned about the good the World War accomplished. As it was "he died believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can be." (2)

Niel Herbert, the idealist, is a character who reveals much of his inner life. In fact the reader gains many of his impressions of the other characters of the book through Niel's thinking; hence many of the things we have already discussed in truth reveal certain aspects of his inner living. Niel was proud like his mother who had died when he was five years old, and he felt that there was an air of failure and defeat about his family. Judge Pommeroy, his maternal uncle, was the one person to whom he clung for the Judge was Capt. Forrester's lawyer and friend. He never enjoyed his father's home over which his cousin Sadie presided, so he was glad that when his father went to Denver he was allowed to read law with his uncle and live by himself in a room behind the law offices. The Judge thought a lot of Niel who was a tall, straight, deliberate boy with clear-cut features and dark grey eyes which were often times moody and challenging. He was reserved and a bit cold because of his critical habit of mind. Although he was thoughtful, he cared but little for reading what others had thought. He wanted to read what others had done.

(1) See V, p. 453 (2) V, p. 458 For Further material on Claude's inner life see V, pp. 121, 127, 196, 206-8, 219-20, 223, 283-4, 319, 349, 375, 405, 419

Niel early sensed a difference between Marian Forrester and the other Sweet Water women. How he treasured the memory of that day of his boyhood when after his fall from the tree he had been taken into the Forrester home where Mrs. Forrester had herself cared for him. (1) For Capt. Forrester Niel had the greatest of admiration. When the Captain uttered his customary toast of "Happy days" "Niel drank his wine with a pleasant shiver, thinking that nothing else made life seem so precarious, the future so cryptic and unfathomable as that brief toast." (2)

It took Niel a long time to realize that Marian Forrester's loveliness was dependent on sensual pleasures. From the very beginning of their acquaintance Niel had sensed something evil about Frank Ellinger, but that he was Marian's lover was something he couldn't at first believe. During one of Capt. Forrester's absences Frank Ellinger came to Sweet Water. He lived at the hotel but spent most of his time with Marian; this provoked Niel who hated to have her waste her time on a man like Ellinger. So one morning at dawn Niel decided to make a boquet for a lovely lady which he would leave just outside one of the French windows of Marian's bedroom. He thought that the sight of the utter beauty of the roses would perhaps give her a sudden distaste for a coarse man like Ellinger. However Marian was destined never to find that bouquet.

> "As Niel bent to place the flowers on the sill, he heard from within a woman's soft laughter; impatient, indulging, teasing, eager. Then another laugh, very different, a man's. And it was fat and lazy,-- ended in something like a yawn.

(1) VI, pp. 26-29
(2) VI, p. 51

"Niel found himself at the foot of the hill on the wooden bridge, his face hot, his temples beating, his eyes blind with anger. In his hand he still carried the prickly bunch of wild roses. He threw them over the wire fence into a mud-hole the cattle had trampled under the bank of the creek.---In that instant between stooping to the window-sill and rising, he had lost one of the most beautiful things in his life. Before the dew dried, the morning had been wrecked for him; and all subsequent mornings, he told himself bitterly. This day saw the end of that admiration and loyalty that had been like a bloom on his existence. He could never recapture it. It was gone, like the morning freshness of the flowers.

"'Lilies that fester,' he muttered, '<u>lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds</u>.'

"---It was not a moral scruple she had outraged, but an <u>aesthetic ideal</u>. Beautiful women, whose beauty meant more than it said---was their brilliancy always fed by something coarse and concealed? Was that their secret?" (1)

After this happening it was a long time before Niel felt at ease with the Forresters. Yet he called on them the day before he left for Boston where he was to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He left the house touched and happy but as he walked over the bridge his spirits fell. Cather thus describes his feelings:

"Would that chilling doubt always lie in wait for him, down there in the mud, where he had thrown his roses one morning?

"He burned to ask her one question, to get the truth out of her and set his mind at rest: What did she do with all her exquisiteness when she was with a man like Ellinger? Where did she put it away? And having put it away, how could she recover herself, and give one--give even him--the sense of tempered steel, a blade that could fence with anyone and never break?" (2)

So Niel left the Forresters.

(1) VI, pp. 86-87
(2) VI, p. 100

Two years later Niel came to Sweet Water for his summer vacation. On the train he met Ivy Peters who told him of his doings in Sweet Water. After Ivy had gone on into the smoker Niel thought of the difference between him and men like Capt. Forrester.

> "The Old West had been settled by dreamers, great-hearted adventurers who were unpractical to the point of magnificence; a courteous brotherhood; strong in attack but weak in defence, who could conquer but could not hold. Now all that vast territory they had won was to be at the mercy of men like Ivy Peters, who had never dared anything, never risked anything. They would drink up the mirage, dispel the morning freshness, root out the great brooding spirit of freedom, the generous, easy life of the great land-holders. The space, the colour, the princely carelessness of the pioneer they would destroy and cut up into profitable bits, as the match factory splinters the primeval forest. All the way from Missouri to the mountains this generation of shrewd young men, trained to petty economies by hard times, would do exactly what Ivy Peters had done when he drained the Forrester Marsh." (1)

Ivy and Niel had disliked each other from boyhood; nevertheless Niel's judgment at this time was very true. Because Ivy spent so much time on the Forrester estate now, Niel no longer cared to make frequent calls upon the Captain and his wife. During one of his occasional calls Capt. Forrester asked him to mail some letters; one of these letters was addressed in Marian's hand writing to Frank Ellinger. Niel was embarrassed as he read the address and tried to slip the letter quickly into his pocket but the Captain prevented him from so doing. Capt. Forrester took the letter and commented on his wife's fine penmanship which was like copper plate; then he returned the letter to Niel. By this time, Niel had decided that the Captain knew everything

(1) VI, pp. 106-7

about his wife. "Now as he went down the hill, he felt sure that he knew everything; more than anyone else; all there was to know about Marian Forrester." (1)

So great was Niel's affection for the Forresters that he stayed with them the following winter to take care of the Captain who was failing rapidly. After Capt. Forrester's death Niel yet remained in Sweet Water to assist his uncle, Judge Pommeroy, who was not well. Mr. Ogden's interview with him in his uncle's office caused Niel to do some thinking about Marian. He decided that without her husband she was like a ship without ballast, driven hither and thither by every wind. (2) After his uncle was able to look after his law practice Niel prepared to return to Boston. This time he felt that he was leaving Sweet Water forever; he felt badly to leave the people and things associated with his boyhood. He realized that he, Niel Herbert, had seen the end of an era, the sunset of the pioneer. "The taste and smell and song of it, the visions those men had seen in the air and followed--these he had caught in a kind of afterglow in their own faces--and this would always be his." (3) He dreaded saying good-bye to Marian Forrester who, unwilling to let her life end with the pioneer period to which she belonged, preferred life on any terms; and Niel never did say good-bye to her for on that evening when he went to call on her he saw something which nearly caused him to lose faith in humankind. As he looked at the honeysuckle outside the window he glanced in just in time to see Ivy Peters come in the door and put both arms around Marian

(1) VI, p. 117
(2) See VI, pp. 152-3
(3) VI, p. 169

Forrester, his hands meeting over her breast. Marian appeared used to this and went on rolling out pastry. Niel felt much as he had that morning when he heard Ellinger and Marian together in her room.

> "Niel went down the hill. 'For the last time.' he said as he crossed the bridge in the evening light, 'for the last time'--- He had given her a year of his life and she had thrown it away. He had helped the Captain to die peacefully, he believed; and now it was the Captain who seemed the reality. All those years he had thought it was Mrs. Forrester who made the house so different from any other. But ever since the Captain's death it was a house where old friends, like his uncle, were betrayed and cast off, where common fellows behaved after their kind and knew a common woman when they saw her.
>
> "If he had not had the nature of a spaniel, he told himself, he would never have gone back after the first time. It took two doses to cure him. Well, he had them! Nothing she could ever do would in the least matter to him again." (1)

Years went by. Niel never saw Marian Forrester again although until she went to the West he occasionally heard indirectly from her. A change took place in Niel's attitude toward her; now that he didn't know whether Daniel Forrester's widow were living or dead Daniel Forrester's wife returned to him a bright impersonal memory. He began to be glad that he had known her.

> "He would call up the shade of the young Mrs. Forrester as the witch of Endor called up Samuel's, and challenge it, demand the secret of that ardour; ask her whether she had really found some ever-blooming, ever, burning, ever-piercing joy, or whether it was all fine play-acting. Probably she had found no more than another; but she had always the power of suggesting things much lovlier than herself, as the perfume of a single flower may call up the whole sweetness of spring." (2)

(1) VI, p. 170
(2) VI, pp. 171-2

So when Ed Elliott told (1) Niel of his brief visit with Marian Forrester Collins and of her death Niel could say truthfully from his heart, "So we may feel sure that she was well cared for, to the very end. Thank God for that!" (2)

Prof. Godfrey St. Peter like many of Cather's other heroes or heroines had foreign blood in his veins. He was born of mixed stock, Canadian French on one side, and American farmers on the other. St. Peter had been and still was a physically fit man. (3) At the time of our story his was an intensely introspective nature. His life with his wife Lillian had at first been vital and very satisfying, but as they grew older they grew apart. Lillian was fiercely jealous of St. Peter's friendship with Tom Outland. The Professor's conversation with Lillian after the second act of "Mignon" reveals something of their youthful feeling for each other.

> "'My dear,' he sighed when the lights were turned on and they both looked older, 'it's been a mistake, our having a family and writing histories and getting middle-aged. We should have been picturesquely shipwrecked together <u>when we were young</u>.'
>
> "'How often I've thought that!' she replied with a faint, melancholy smile.
>
> "'You? But you're so occupied with the future, you adapt yourself so readily,' he murmured in astonishment.
>
> "'One must go on living, Godfrey. But <u>it wasn't the children who came between us</u>.' There was <u>something lonely and forgiving in her voice</u>, something that spoke of an old wound, healed and hardened and hopeless.
>
> "'You, you too?' he breathed in amazement." (4)

Their two daughters, Rosamond and Kathleen, as children had

(1) See p. 23 (2) VI, p. 174
(3) Cf. C, P. 75 (4) VII, p. 94

brought Godfrey St. Peter much happiness. However the writing of the "Spanish Adventurers" had made St. Peter very happy for then he had been able to live in the past as his very inner being wanted to. When his wife asked him if there was something he had rather have done than build the new house with the money he had received as a prize for this work, he said:

> "Nothing, my dear, nothing. If with that cheque I could have bought back the fun I had writing my history, you'd never have got your house. But one couldn't get that for twenty thousand dollars. The great pleasures don't come so cheap. There is nothing else, thank you." (1)

The Professor in truth had lived two lives. Because he loved youth and was responsive to it he had given of his best in the lecture room. And at the same time he had carried on an engrossing piece of creative work for St. Peter believed "a man can do anything if he wishes to enough. Desire is creation, is the magical element in that process." (2) Tom Outland had not only been St. Peter's favorite pupil but he had also been a source of inspiration to him, for Outland had possessed an intense love of the ancient civilizations.

"The boy's mind had the superabundance of heat which is always present where there is rich germination. To share his thoughts was to see old perspectives transformed by new effects of light." (3)

Now that he was past middle age Godfrey St. Peter found that living seemed to hold very little for him, he couldn't enjoy the things which seemed to bring pleasure to his family. From religion he could get but little comfort for he had never

(1) VII, p. 33 (2) VII, p. 29
(3)VII, p. 258 ; This paper p. 101

been a religious man; he had always done right because it was the proper thing to do, not because of any religious beliefs. So he turned to introspection and commenced living a life apart from the others; yet Cather tells us he was by no means an ascetic. (1) As he studied himself nothing seemed real to him but the past and ideas. This bit of conversation reveals not only something of St. Peter's new way of living but also his wife's inability to understand him:

> "'Godfrey,' she said slowly and sadly, 'I wonder what it is that makes you draw away from your family. Or who it is.'
>
> 'My dear are you going to be jealous?'
>
> 'I wish I were going to be. I'd much rather see you foolish about some woman than becoming lonely and inhuman.'
>
> 'Well the habit of living with ideas grows on one, I suppose, just as inevitably as the more cheerful habit of living with various ladies. There's something to be said for both.'
>
> 'I think your ideas were best when you were your most human self.'
>
> St. Peter sighed, 'I can't contradict you there. But I must go on as I can. It is not always May.'
>
> 'You are not old enough for the pose you take---You're naturally warm and affectionate; all at once you begin shutting yourself away from everybody---Why is it, Godfrey? I can't see any change in your face, though I watch you so closely. It's in your mind, in your mood. Something has come over you.---What is it, can't you tell me?'
>
> 'I can't altogether tell myself, Lillian. It's not wholly a matter of the calendar. It's the feeling that I've put a great deal behind me, where I can't go back to it again--and I don't really wish to go back---I wasn't willing to slight anything--you, or my desk, or my students. And now I seem to

(1) VII, p. 26

be tremendously tired.'" (1)

During the summer that his wife was in France with Marsellus and Rosamond, not Tom Outland but the Kansas boy that St. Peter had been came back to him.

> "He (this boy) was not nearly so cultivated as Tom's old cliff-dwellers must have been--and yet he was terribly wise. He seemed to be at the root of the matter; Desire under all desires, Truth under all truths. He seemed to know among other things, that he was solitary and must always be so; he had never married, never been a father. He was earth, and would return to earth." (2)

St. Peter seemed able to enjoy half-awake loafing with his brain as if it were a new sense lately arrived. In this day dreaming he renewed his friendship with original unmodified Godfrey St. Peter getting a sad pleasure out of it. In truth his first nature had returned to the Professor who did not regret his life but was so indifferent to it that it seemed to him like the life of another person. (3) Along with this return of his original nature came the conviction that he was soon to die. Yet Dr. Dudley, his old friend and physician, after making many tests told him that absolutely nothing was the matter with him. Even then St. Peter continued to think of dying and his house was the house of death, and these lines of Longfellow were uppermost in his mind:

> "For thee a house was built
> Ere thou wast born;
> For thee a mould was made
> Ere thou of woman camest." (4)

Now St. Peter thought differently of death than he ever had before.

(1) VII, pp. 162-3; See also 6, p. 48
(2) VII, p. 265 (3) VII, pp. 263-7
(4) VII, p. 272

"But now he thought of eternal solitude with gratefulness; as a release from every obligation, from every form of effort. It was the Truth." (1)

When Prof. St. Peter learned that his wife and the Marselluses were to return home very soon on the Berengaria it seemed to him that he could never live with his family again. All that afternoon he spent in reviewing his life, every happening of which seemed to have been fated. Lost in thought he finally fell asleep. The wind blew out the flame of the gas stove and shut the window. If it had not been for Augusta's timely arrival St. Peter surely would have been asphyxiated, for when he became conscious of the gas fumes he didn't want to save himself--accidental death was welcome. This marked the crisis in St. Peter's introspective period; after it he could adopt Augusta's philosophy of life and live without delight.

As St. Peter lay warm and relaxed after the doctor had departed he wondered where he had made his mistake.

"Perhaps the mistake was merely in an attitude of mind. He had never learned to live without delight.---Theoretically he knew that life is possible, may be even pleasant, without joy, without passionate griefs. But it had never occurred to him that he might have to live like that. ------

"His temporary release from consciousness seemed to have been beneficial. He had let something go--and it was gone: something very precious, that he could not consciously have relinquished, probably. He doubted whether his family would ever realize that he was not the same man they had said good-bye to; they would be too happily preoccupied with their own affairs. If his apathy hurt them, they could not possibly be so much hurt as he had been already. At least, he felt the ground under his feet. He thought he knew where he was, and that he could face with fortitude the Berengaria and the future." (2)

(1) VII, p. 272
(2) VII, p. 283

In truth St. Peter's will, intellect and emotions were now in harmony, and in the future he was to live an even life comparable to that lived by Augusta. (1) After all Prof. Godfrey St. Peter was one of us facing old age just as truly as Claude Wheeler was "one of ours" trying to find some worthwhile reason for living.

As we have studied these representative characters of Cather's novels, we have come to realize that the author herself very deeply sympathized with them as they struggled against a hostile society. Evidently to Cather the real thing in life is the struggle of the individual to live out his potentialities. Because Cather presents her characters as individuals, Regis Michaud calls her realism minute. He says she presents her characters as one would set a green vase beside a yellow orange; so that each is a separate center of interest, and yet lends its color to the other. (2) Possibly some may feel that too much is written in this paper about the representative characters of Cather's novels. In defense of the number of pages devoted to character study the writer simply expresses her belief that character is the kernel of the novel.

3.

Remoteness of Event (3)

From choice Cather dislikes very much to cause the reader to feel that he is seeing all the events of her novels enacted before his very eyes, or all the time hearing characters themselves speak as if in his presence. So that the reader may not

(1) See p102(3) See Indirect Narrative Method pp. 19-26 and
(2) See 4 Reminiscent Narrative Method pp. 26-35

think that he, the author, and the character or characters are alone together in the living present (the time of the novel) Cather quietly removes many events to a past time or causes events to have been several times told before the reader learns of them. So there is a real reason for Cather's style.

In this section we will offer only a few illustrations to show what we mean by remoteness of event, for in Chapter I, Parts 2 and 3 we have already mentioned these. The reader hears the story of the Russian bride from Jim Burden, who heard it from Antonia who heard it as Pavel told it to Mr. Shimerda. (1) Jim Burden tells the story of Mr. Shimerda's death which he had heard from Jake and Otto to the reader. (2) The story of the coming of Marsellus to Hamilton is presented to the reader as he listens to Mrs. Crane talking to Prof. St. Peter. (3) We hear the pathetic story of Marie Louise as an old French woman tells it to Claude. (4) Through the eyes of Niel Herbert we see Marian Forrester as Frank Ellinger's mistress. (5) Jim Burden relates to us the story of Antonia's tragic love affair with Larry Donovan as he heard it from the Widow Steavens. (6) The story of Tom Outland's summer on the Blue Mesa is told in the first person as Outland himself recorded it in his diary; (7) it is interesting to note that Outland had been <u>dead several years</u> when this story is told thus making it seem to come from another world.

The legends (8) introduced into the novels cause the reader to feel that their happenings are remote from both him and

(1) IV, pp. 63-67 (2) IV, pp. 117-18 (3) VII, pp. 135-9
(4) V, pp. 437-9 (5) VI, p. 86 (6) IV, pp. 34-9
(7) VII, pp. 179-253(8) See pp. 151-4

Cather. These legends appear especially in her last two novels, but occasionally one appears in the earlier novels as the legend of the sunflower in Nebraska in "My Antonia." (1)

(1) IV, pp. 31-32

CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE FOR IDEAL EXISTENCE

Through the struggle of the main characters in her novels to achieve an ideal existence we discover Cather's own changing conception of ideal existence. In her first six novels, the main characters all struggle to reach in this life the existence ideal to them. Of course they are all real and very human so that they don't reach this ideal existence; yet they, with the exception of Bartley Alexander, approach it. In the seventh novel, "The Professor's House," the struggle for ideal existence leads away from vital living. And in the three succeeding novels the ideal existence moves from the physical world to the world of the mind and life to come.

Bartley Alexander, the bridge-builder, very much wanted to really live, so Cather says; but still he couldn't make up his mind to leave his wife Winifred. Neither could he give up his friendship with Hilda Burgoyne, who was so vital. So what was he to do? Alexander had just decided he couldn't live two lives when he was drowned as one of his own bridges collapsed. Hence although he did become famous as a builder of bridges Alexander never lived the life he really wanted to. (1)

In "O Pioneers!" the calm and unemotional Alexandria Bergson desired to overcome the prairie. As a young girl she had promised her dying father that she would look after their land. In her struggle with the prairie Alexandria was victorious. If Lou and Oscar, her brothers, had only played fair with her,--but they didn't--and if she had only understood her passionate younger brother Emil, but she just couldn't, things might have

(1) See pp. 68-9

been different. So although Alexandria's fields and buildings were the best in the country she had her troubles with her family. Probably she and her passionless lover, Carl Linstrum, understood each other, but did they enjoy life to the limit? (1) Emil Bergson and Marie Shabata felt that the only ideal existence for them was living together. When they at last decided to realize this existence death released them from this life.(2)

Thea Kronborg in "The Song of the Lark" struggled very hard to become a famous artist just as Cather herself has done. But Thea had musical talent, but Cather's talent is in literature. As a child while she practiced diligently on the piano, Thea had a knowledge of her talent for singing; but from all save Herr Wuncsh she kept this knowledge hidden. Several years later Andor Harsanyi discovered Thea's voice and from then on how hard she struggled to become a truly great operatic singer. Thea realized her ambition that night when she had a chance to sing the part of Sieglinde. (3) To the past and to her friends Thea owed much for her success as an operatic singer. (4)

The ideal existence for Antonia was that of being a mother. (5) Destiny, so Antonia felt, had shaped her career with but little struggle on her part. The reader senses in Antonia an heroic quality which raised her life so far above the actual events of it, that motherhood for her was on such a high plane that it brought with it absolute peace and contentment. Jim Burden never was as satisfied with physical living as was Antonia, he lived more in the world of the mind. (6)

(1) See pp. 69-71 (2) See pp. 71-2 (3) III, p. 436-43
(4) See pp. 72-83 (5) See pp. 83-86
(6) See pp. 111-115

The struggle for the ideal existence in "One of Ours" is most pronounced. Claude Wheeler may have been Willa Cather herself as she struggled to find her place in life. The ideal existence as Claude found it in France came from within not from without. (1) The very sound of the guns seemed to say to him,

> "that men could still die for an idea and would burn all they had made to keep their dreams. ---Ideals were not archaic things, beautiful and impotent; they were the real sources of power among men. As long as that was true, and now he knew it was true--he had come all this way to find out--he had no quarrel with Destiny." (2)

The ideal existence for Marian Forrester was one in which men should give her passionate adoration. She was willing to give of her charm to the finest men or to the poorest, if she only might have this adoration--she preferred the finest, however. Marian, too, desired all the comforts and luxuries that only money could provide, so the adoring male must be wealthy if he were to suit her. Never did Marian in her effort to achieve for herself this ideal existence entirely succeed; fate seemed to be against her for exactly the right environment was always lacking. (3)

Niel Herbert lived more in the world of the mind. If Marian Forrester had proved herself worthy of his friendship, his world would have been very different. He wanted to know and think of only the highest and best things. After the death of Marian Forrester Niel began again to think of her as the lovely woman he had once believed her to be. Then he was nearer toward realizing his ideal existence than he had been before. (4)

(1) See pp. 118-9
(2) V, pp. 419-20 (3) See pp. 89-92
(4) See pp. 124-5

Godfrey St. Peter had, as a young man, enjoyed the pleasures of living. This living had been really in two worlds, the physical world and the world of the mind. Unlike his wife, Lillian, when he became middle aged he couldn't continue to derive enjoyment from the ordinary pleasures of life. At last he emerged from a period of deep introspection into an existence which was ideal to him as it lacked both joy and passionate grief. But in achieving this existence he had to let something very precious go. (1) For Tom Outland, who lived in the world of the mind, the relics of a prehistoric civilization symbolized the ideal existence. Death released him from life before society and all it stands for could claim him. (2)

To Myra Henshawe the ideal existence was one in which she should have wealth and influence. Had she not, contrary to her uncle's wishes, married Oswald she might have had this wealth. But like most young people she was headstrong and mistook her infatuation for Oswald for lasting love--and perhaps it might have been had he acquired wealth. During the first part of her married life Myra struggled to at least keep up the appearance of having much money; even then her husband's more-than-moderate salary was not sufficient for this. And during the last of her married life she endeavored to keep her friends from knowing of their poverty by living far from them and not corresponding with them. We must not fail to state that the Catholic religion was finally a part of Myra's ideal existence, thus she added to the physical the spiritual. She had the delusion that

(1) See pp. 129
(2) See pp. 101-2

her husband was trying to separate her from the Catholic Church and that she must strive to outwit him in this. And so Myra died a poor woman, realizing that in her mind she had never given up the fortune that might have been hers. But she died a good Catholic saying only a day or two before her death, "Religion is different from everything else; because in religion seeking is finding." (1)

The ideal existence for Fathers Latour and Vaillant was that in which the spirit was master of the body. Without struggle they so nearly achieved this existence that the messenger Death simply came for the Archbishop as he had come earlier for Bishop Vaillant. Because the spirit had prevailed over the flesh neither father feared death which to them--particularly to Fr. Latour--was a means of escape to the life where the spirit would not be hampered by the body. The nearness of the life-to-come to this life was brought out in Fr. Latour's letter to Fr. Vaillant's sister.

> "Since your brother was called to his reward I feel nearer to him than before. For many years Duty separated us, but death has brought us together." (2)

To Cecile as well as to Jeanne Le Ber the ideal existence was that of the Ursulines and the Hospitalieres who lived in the world of the mind. (3) But to Euclide Auclair the ideal existence was that of which the home and Church and a profession were the center. (4) So Cecile influenced by her father never probably seriously thought of becoming a nun herself. And never as far as the reader knows did she struggle mentally or physically to achieve her ideal existence.

(1) VIII, p. 111; See pp. 147-8
(2) VII, p. 265 (3) See pp. 173-4
(4) See pp. 108-9

CHAPTER VI

RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND ART

To Cather the primitive art of the savage is a symbol of the inborn spiritual idealsim symbolic of the soul. In her comment on the turquoise which Ray Kennedy had taken from the burial mound of a princess we get, by implication at least, an expression of Cather's preference for primitive art.

> "It was a turquoise, rubbed smooth in the Indian finish, which is so much more beautiful than the incongruous high polish the white man gives that tender stone." (1)

Cather's novels are her payment in art on the debt owed primitive man by all his successors; hence she tries to make them just as artistic as possible. Ray Kennedy speaking of the habitations of the Cliff-Dwellers voices Cather's attitude toward prehistoric civilization. Ray said:

> "I've learned more down there about what makes history than in all the books I've ever read. When you sit in the sun and let your heels hang out of a doorway that drops a thousand feet, ideas come to you. You begin to feel what the human race has been up against from the beginning. There's something mighty elevating about those old habitations. You feel like it's up to you to do your best, on account of those fellows having it so hard. You feel like you owed them something." (2)

These early people had expressed themselves in the very best art they were capable of and so does Cather. (3) But like Thea Kronborg she loses all sense of the present as she contemplates the artistic symbols of primitive civilization.

The emphasis on primitive art in "The Song of the Lark" is obvious. (4) The habitations and art of the Cliff-Dwellers in truth form a background for Thea's artistic success.

The months spent at Panther Canyon made Thea able to become

(1) VII, p. 117 (2) See III, p. 118
(3) See pp. 18-19
(4) See also III, pp. 53-4, 117, 118

the artist that she did; for there she not only got back to the earliest sources of gladness that she could remember--the sun and the sand--but there she also came in contact with the prehistoric past. Day after day Thea sat in the same rock-room, once occupied by the Cliff-Dwellers, not merely thinking but experiencing one sensation after another. Each morning she took her bath in a pool at the bottom of the canyon.

> "She sometimes felt as if the water must have sovereign qualities, from having been the object of so much service and desire. That stream was the only living thing left of the drama that had been played out in the canyon centuries ago. In the rapid, restless heart of it, flowing swifter than the rest, there was a continuity of life that reached back into the old time. The glittering thread of current had a kind of lightly worn, loosely knit personality, graceful and laughing. Thea's bath came to have a ceremonial gravity. The atmosphere of the canyon was ritualistic.
>
> "One morning, as she was standing upright in the pool, splashing water between her shoulder-blades with a big sponge, something flashed through her mind that made her draw herself up and stand still until the water had quite dried upon her flushed skin. The stream and the broken pottery: what was any art but an effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to imprison for a moment the shining, elusive element which is life itself,--life hurrying past us, and running away, too strong to stop, too sweet to lose? The Indian women had held it in their jars. In the sculpture she had seen in the Art Institute, it had been caught in a flash of arrested motion. In singing, one made a vessel of one's throat and nostrils and held it on one's breath, caught the stream in a scale of natural intervals." (1)

About the potsherds Thea was almost superstitious for they expressed the desire of the primitive people just as beautifully as the savage hand could make them. Thea sensed that these early people "had felt the beginnings of what was to come.

(1) III, p. 304

These potsherds were like fetters that bound one to a long chain of human endeavor----- The Cliff-Dwellers had lengthened her past. She had older and higher obligations." (1)

Again in "The Professor's House" we find several passages which reflect Cather's belief that the art of prehistoric man expressed his religion. Prof. St. Peter and Tom Outland both had great respect, yes even reverence, for the peoples of prehistoric times and their civilization. Father Duchene expressed their feeling very effectively.

> "Like you, I feel a reverence for this place (city of the Cliff-Dwellers). Wherever humanity has made that hardest of all starts and lifted itself out of mere brutality, is a sacred spot. Your people were cut off here without the influence of example or emulation, with no incentive but some natural yearning for order and security. They built themselves into this mesa and humanized it." (2)

Prof. St. Peter before the opening of the story had written his masterpiece "The Spanish Adventurers" thus expressing his reverence for past civilizations.

As Tom Outland described the Cliff-Dwellers' village which he had discovered, we think we really are hearing Willa Cather's own description.

> "Far above me, a thousand feet or so, set in a great cavern in the face of the cliff, I saw a little city of stone, asleep. It was as still as sculpture--and something like that. It all hung together, seemed to have a kind of composition; pale little houses of stone nestling close to one another, perched on top of each other, with flat roofs, narrow windows, straight walls, and in the middle of the group, a round tower.
>
> "It was beautifully proportioned, that tower,

(1) III, p. 306, 308
(2) VII, p. 221; See also VII, p. 243

swelling out to a larger girth a little above the base, then growing slender again. There was something symmetrical and powerful about the swell of the masonry. The tower was the fine thing that held all the jumble of houses together and made them mean something.---A fringe of cedars grew along the edge of the cavern like a garden. They were the only living things. Such silence and stillness and repose--immortal repose. That village sat looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity.

"---I had been to Acoma and the Hopi villages, but I'd never seen a tower like that one. It seemed to me to mark a difference. I felt that only a strong and aspiring people would have built it, and a people with a feeling for design." (1)

In "Death Comes For the Archbishop" Cather again shows through her portrayal of the Indian her veneration for the past. The Indian of the story is an ideal character symbolizing her faith in prehistoric civilization and art. Several times do we find Fr. Latour expressing Cather's attitude toward the Indian.

"Father Latour remarked that their veneration for old customs was a quality he liked in the Indians, and that it played a <u>great part in his own religion</u>." (2)

The fact that the Indian disliked novelty and change was pleasing to Fr. Latour. That the Indian accepted natural beauty as it was, also pleased him--and so does it Cather. Fr. Latour thinks thus of Indian art:

"In the working of silver or drilling of turquoise the Indians had exhaustless patience; upon their blankets and belts and ceremonial robes they lavished their skill and pains. But their conception of decoration did not extend to the landscape. They seemed to have none of the European's desire to 'master' nature, to arrange and re-create. They spent their ingenuity in the other direction; in accommodating themselves to the scene in which they found themselves. This was not so much from indolence, the Bishop thought, as from an inherited caution and respect. It was as if the great country

(1) VII, p. 201, 203-4
For further description of village see pp. 207-10; 213-221
(2) IX, p. 138

were asleep, and they wished to carry on their lives without awakening it; or as if the spirits of earth and air and water were things not to antagonize and arouse. When they hunted, it was with the same discretion; an Indian hunt was never a slaughter. They ravaged neither the rivers nor the forest, and if they irrigated, they took as little water as would serve their needs. The land and all that it bore they treated with consideration; not attempting to improve it, they never desecrated it. (1)

The Acoma Rock was symbolical of the early striving of the Indian to find something permanent in life. Again through Fr. Latour's reflections on this rock Cather expresses her belief that natural art is religion.

"The rock, when one came to think of it, was the utmost expression of human need; even mere feeling yearned for it; it was the highest comparison of loyalty in love and friendship. Christ himself had used that comparison for the disciple to whom He gave the keys of His Church. And the Hebrews of the Old Testament, always being carried captive into foreign lands,--their rock was an idea of God, the only thing their conquerors could not take from them.

"---The Acomas, who must share the universal human yearning for something permanent, enduring, without shadow of change,--they had their idea in substance. They actually lived upon their Rock; were born upon it and died upon it. (2)

At the very edge of this mesa was the <u>old</u> warlike church of Acoma which had been built early in sixteen hundred. As Fr. Latour celebrated Mass in this ancient cathedral he felt as though he were at the bottom of the sea celebrating Mass for antediluvian creatures so isolated from civilization were these Indians. (3)

(1) IX, pp. 236-7
(2) IX, pp. 98-99
(3) VII, pp. 96-104

Because Cather feels so very deeply that primitive man's art is an expression of the longing of the soul she has come to believe that religion and true art are the same thing. In Prof. St. Peter's lecture she says, "Art and religion (they are the same thing, in the end, of course) have given man the only happiness he has ever had." (1)

(1) VIII, p. 69

CHAPTER VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IMMATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL

Reference To After-Life

A few writers either directly or by implication emphasize in their novels the importance of the after-life, thus making the present life less important. By these writers the reality of life is not keenly sensed; rather to them this life is just a period of preparation or training. Some think this period should be wholly spent in subduing the flesh through its mortification; others believe that the individual should simply meet the problems of life fairly and squarely at the same time getting all the possible enjoyment out of life. The attitude of the former reminds us of the Puritan's attitude as he believed that everything beautiful came from the devil and so should be destroyed, and that all pleasure-giving impulses should be stifled. By implication Cather lays emphasis on the importance of the after-life. In her earlier novels there is expressed in the lives of many of the characters a love of the reality of life; yet pervading them all is an inexpressible something which emphasizes the importance of the after-life. Her last novels clearly imply the importance of the life-to-come and death as a means of escape to it. Unlike the Puritans Cather cares for art and beauty as her novels plainly show.

In "My Mortal Enemy" Myra Henshawe during her last illness thought a great deal about the after-life. In a remark which she one day made to Father Fay we may well believe that she was expressing Cather's own belief about religion. Myra said,

"Religion is different from everything else; because in religion seeking is finding." (1) Then, that the reader may grasp the significance of this statement, the author causes Nellie Birdseye to explain it.

> "She accented 'seeking' very strongly, very deeply. She seemed to say that in other searchings it might be the object of the quest that brought satisfaction, or it might be something incidental that one got on the way; but in religion, desire was fulfilment, it was the seeking itself that rewarded." (2)

This emphasis placed on the after-life makes it seem not a life in an unknown and distant heaven but rather a life which is but a continuation of this one and to be lived just around the corner. (3)

> "From the freshness of roses and lilies from the glory of the high altar, he had gone straight to the greater glory, through smoking censers and candles and stars." (4)

> "They could not doubt that that invisible arm was still about Amedee; that through the church on earth he had passed to the church triumphant, the goal of the hopes and faith of so many hundred years." (5)

> "In those days death had a solemn social importance. It was not regarded as a moment when certain bodily organs ceased to function, but as a dramatic climax, a moment when the soul made its entrance into the next world, passing in full consciousness through a lowly door to an unimaginable scene." (6)

The fact that Myra Henshawe spoke of death as a friend, and the title "Death Comes For the Archbishop" make it plain that death is but the messenger sent to conduct people to the after-life. And death offers to many a means of release from life. A young person may preserve his youthful idealism only if death comes

(1) VIII, p. 111 (2) VIII, p. 112 (3) See pp. 173-4
(4) VIII, p. 27 (5) II, p. 252
(6) IX, p. 172

for him while he is still young. Amedee, Ray Kennedy and Claude Wheeler all died still in possession of their youthful illusions of life. Mrs. Wheeler's remarks made when she had seen the effect of disillusionment on soldiers who survived the War explain this attitude toward death.

> "When she (Mrs. Wheeler) can see nothing that has come out of it all but evil, she reads Claude's letters over again and reassures herself; for him the call was clear, the cause was glorious. Never a doubt stained his bright faith----He died believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be. And those were beautiful beliefs to die with." (1)

And an older person may be released from the hardship of life by death as were Mr. Bergson and Mr. Shimerda. Too the older person may regard death as the door between the two lives; Fr. Latour and Fr. Vaillant surely stepped from one life to the next.

2.

Death

The subject of death appears in every one of Cather's novels. In all these novels save one at least, one character dies, and in that one novel, "The Professor's House," an important character, Tom Outland has been dead a number of years. But death doesn't seem a thing that should be dreaded as Cather refers to it; the hard part is not for the one who dies, rather it is for those who are left.

Death it was that solved Bartley Alexander's problem, (2) in "Alexander's Bridge." Mr. Bergson's death in the first part of "O Pioneers!" made Alexandria the head of the family. And

(1) V, p. 458
(2) See pp. 68-9

in that same book Marie Shabata and Emil Bergson find happiness together only to die together; (1) Amedee died before he had lost his youthful idealism. The frequent mention of the Norwegian graveyard is symbolic of the relative unimportance of this life. As the author introduces the reader to the prairie of Part II it is this Norwegian graveyard that she first mentions; then she describes the surrounding country as one sees it while standing in the graveyard. (2)

The presence of death gives "The Song of the Lark" a touch of things not of this earth. The unpleasant episode in Moonstone caused by the death of the tramp in the resevoir played its part in Thea's education. (3) Ray Kennedy died while he still believed in the best things of life. (4) Mrs. Kronborg's death is spoken of as something she had no desire to avoid. (5)

Jim Burden, the boy, in "My Antonia" expressed his idea of death which may well be Cather's own.

> "I kept as still as I could. Nothing happened. I did not expect anything to happen. I was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. At any rate, <u>that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great.</u> When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep. (6)

In this book the death and burial of Mr. Shimerda is important not alone because of its effect upon Antonia's life but also because of its artistic effect upon the rest of the book. Surely death offered to Antonia's father the only possible means of escape from this life after he had been bitterly disillusioned

(1) See pp. 71-2 (2) See II, pp. 75-6
(3) See III, pp. 136-40 (4) See III, pp. 141-52
(5) See III, pp. 80-1 (6) IV, p. 20

about living in the New World. (1)

Capt. Forrester's death in "A Lost Lady" brings into that book the presence of death. (2) But even after his death he seemed a reality to Niel Herbert. (3)

As we have said before in "The Professor's House" no character actually dies. However the story of Tom Outland introduced a character who had been dead these several years, thus closely linking this life with the life-to-come. And the Professor's House was the house of death. (4) In a way a part of St. Peter himself, which was his desire to live a vital life, died that night when he was so nearly asphyxiated.

Myra Henshawe, in "My Mortal Enemy" died alone as she faced the rising sun. Like Mr. Shimerda she found in death a means of escape from life. Myra even spoke of death as a friend. (5)

Both Fr. Latour and Fr. Vaillant in "Death Comes For the Archbishop" simply slipped from one life to another as Death came for them. (6) To them the only real things of this life were those belonging to the after-life as well. The description of the death of Fr. Lucero made of death a spectacular event.(7)

In "Shadows On the Rock" the emphasis placed on the part Cecile's mother then dead had played in establishing their home brings life and death together. To Count Frontenac death came as a release from the hard things of life; he died like the soldier he had always been. (8)

3.

Legends and Miracles

(1) See pp. 21-22, IV (2) See pp. 93-4 (3) See p. 124
(4) See p. 128-9 (5) See pp. 104
(6) See pp.170, 172-3 (7) See IX, pp. 168-74
(8) See also p. 149

In her last novels Cather lays much stress on immaterial things. Legends, particularly those which have to do with the church and the lives of the saints are to be found in these novels. The Legend of Our Lady of Guadaloupe in America is one of the prettiest of these legends. According to this legend which was related to Fr. Latour by Padre Herrera, the Mother of God appeared to a poor neophyte as he was hurrying down Tapeyac hill to attend Mass in the City of Mexico. To this neophyte She said, "Juan, seek out thy Bishop and bid him build a church in my honor on the spot where I now stand. Go then, and I will bide here and await thy return." (1) But the Bishop distrusted his report telling him that he should have demanded a sign. So poor Juan sorrowing went out into the country to take care of his sick uncle. So sad did he feel that he dared not revisit the spot where the Virgin had appeared to him. A few days later She again appeared to Juan; this time she comforted him telling him that his uncle would be healed within the hour. Finally when She asked him to tell his Bishop about building the church Juan said that the Bishop had demanded a sign. Then Our Lady said, "Go up on the rocks yonder, and gather roses". (2) And on the rocks even if it was December he found such roses as he had never seen before. When he had filled his mantle with the roses Our Lady arranged them and told him not to open his mantle until he opened it before the Bishop. Juan hurried to the Bishop whom he told that the Lady had sent him the roses as a sign.

(1) IX, p. 47
(2) IX, p. 48

"He held up one end of his tilma and let the roses fall in profusion to the floor. To his astonishment, Bishop Zumarraga and his Vicar instantly fell upon their knees among the flowers. On the inside of his poor mantle was a painting of the Blessed Virgin, in robes of blue and rose and gold, exactly as she had appeared to him upon the hill-side.

"A shrine was built to contain this miraculous portrait, which since that day has been the goal of countless pilgrimages and has performed many miracles." (1)

The Legend of Fray Baltazar (2) is very different from the one we have just told; and the Legend of Fr. Junipero (3) is of yet another type.

All the stories about Catherine de Saint-Augustin which she dearly liked to hear Cecile believed implicitly. The reader is allowed to hear the one about Catherine and Marie the pecheresse. (4) To Cecile the Rock of Quebec symbolized all the strivings of the early missionaries to establish Christianity in the new country; most of the accounts of the experiences of these missionaries had really become legends.

"On such solemn days all the stories of the rock came to life for Cecile; the shades of the early martyrs and great missionaries drew close about her. All the miracles that had happened there, and the dreams that had been dreamed, came out of the fog; every spire, every ledge and pinnacle, took on the splendour of legend. When one passed by the Jesuits', those solid walls seemed sentinelled by a glorious company of martyrs, martyrs who were explorers and heroes as well; at the Hotel Dieu, Mother Catherine de Saint-Augustin and her story rose up before one; at the Ursulines', Marie de l'Incarnation overshadowed the living." (5)

The Indians themselves had their myths or legends which the white men could never fully understand. The myth of the snake

(1) IX, p. 49 (2) See IX, pp. 105-17
(3) See IX, pp. 281-4 (4) See X, pp. 37-9
(5) X, p. 95

was one which puzzled even Fr. Latour. After a night spent in the mysterious cave with Jacinto, Fr. Latour did not feel that he knew any more about this snake said to be held as sacred by the Pecos Indians, for as Zeb Orchard said, "No white man knows anything about Indian religion." (1) Even so Fr. Latour was much impressed by Jacinto's behavior while in that hidden cave. (2)

Miracles, too, have their place in these last novels of Cather. As most of the legends which we have already mentioned are accounts of miracles, we will not repeat them. In reading these we almost feel that Cather herself believed them and wanted the reader to believe them too. In Prof. St. Peter's lecture Cather expresses the need of the human race for miracles as well as for ceremony.

> "As long as every man and woman who crowded into the cathedral on Easter Sunday was a principal in a gorgeous drama with God, glittering angels on one side and the shadows of evil coming and going on the other, life was a rich thing. The king and the beggar had the same chance at miracles and great temptations and revelations. And that's what makes men happy, believing in the mystery and importance of their own little individual lives." (3)

Fr. Vaillant who himself had an almost child-like belief in miracles said to Fr. Latour, "Doctrine is well enough for the wise; but the miracle is something we can hold in our hands and love." (4) In reply Fr. Latour stated what may be called Cather's explanation of a belief in miracles.

> "Where there is great love there are always miracles. One might almost say that an apparition

(1) IX, p. 137 (2) See IX, pp. 128-34
(3) VIII, p. 67 (4) IX, p. 50

is human vision corrected by divine love. I do not see you as you really are Joseph; I see you through my affection for you. The Miracles of the Church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always." (1)

And again in "Shadows On the Rock" we hear Cather speaking of miracles:

"The people have loved miracles for so many hundred years, not as proof or evidence, but because they are the actual flowering of desire. In them the vague worship and devotion of the simple-hearted assumes a form. From being a shapeless longing, it becomes a beautiful image; a dumb rapture becomes a melody that can be remembered and repeated; and the experience of a moment, which might have been a lost ecstasy, is made an actual possession and can be bequeathed to another." (2)

The miracle at Montreal when the two angels entered Jeanne Le Ber's cell to mend her spinning wheel took place during the time of the novel "Shadows On the Rock." Blinker first told Cecile of this miracle which made her very happy and excited. To Blinker she said,

"It's a wonderful thing to happen, so near us--and in that great snow storm! Don't you like to know the angels are just as near to us here as they are in France?" (3)

Yes, Cecile so truly believed in miracles that she thought the powdered bones of a saint when eaten by a non-Christian would make him a good Catholic. Because her father didn't share her belief in miracles of all kinds Cecile always lived partly in the world of her own time.

Cather's emphasis in her last two novels on the immaterial things of life caused Clifton Fadiman to call them reworked

(1) IX, pp. 50-1 (2) X, p. 137
(3) X, p. 129

legends--or acceptable additions to the lives of the saints. In them he says life is gently set in a sanctuary and viewed through a stained glass window. (1) Although Mr. Fadiman is somewhat too radical in his criticism of these novels the writer feels that there is a good bit of truth in what he says for in novels which so stress legends, myths and miracles the reality of life can not be present.

(1) See 9, p. 565

CHAPTER VIII

THE GROWING ASCETICISM

Cather is unable to adjust herself to the modern scientific world. She longs for the religious custom and beliefs of the remote past, and so as the years have passed, has become in her thoughts more and more of an ascetic. As we hear Prof. St. Peter lecturing to his class about science we well may imagine that we are listening to Cather expressing her own views.

> "No Miller, I don't myself think much of science as a phase of human development. It has given us a lot of ingenious toys; they take our attention away from the real problems, of course, and since the problems are insoluble, I suppose we ought to be grateful for distraction. But the fact is the human mind, the individual mind, has always been made more interesting by dwelling on the old riddles, even if it makes nothing of them. Science hasn't given us any new amazements, except of the superficial kind we get from witnessing dexterity and sleight-of-hand. It hasn't given us any richer pleasures, as the Renaissance did, nor any new sins--not one! Indeed, it takes our old ones away. It's the laboratory, not the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. You'll agree there is not much thrill about a physiological sin. We were better off when even the prosaic matter of taking nourishment could have the magnificence of a sin. I don't think you help people by making their conduct of no importance--you impoverish them. As long as every man and woman who crowded into the cathedral on Easter Sunday was a principal in a gorgeous drama with God, glittering angels on one side and the shadows of evil coming and going on the other, life was a rich thing.
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> --------
>
> "Moses learned the importance of that in the Egyptian court, and when he wanted to make a population of slaves into an independent people in the shortest possible time, he invented elaborate ceremonials to give them a feeling of dignity and purpose. Every act had some imaginative end. The cutting of the finger nails was a religious observance. The Christian theologians went over the books of the Law, like great artists, getting splendid effects by excision. They reset the stage with more space and mystery, throwing all the light

> upon a few sins of great dramatic value--only seven, you remember, and of those only three that are perpetually enthralling. With the theologians came the cathedral-builders; the sculptors and glass workers and painters. They might, without sacrilege, have changed the prayer a little and said, 'Thy will be done in art, as it is in heaven.' How can it be done anywhere else as it is in heaven? But I think the hour is up." (1)

Surely it is not because Cather has chosen to write historical novels that she has broken with reality.

> "But Miss Cather's break with reality is not in her mere choice of historical novel; it is in her using the historical novel as the vehicle for an altered point of view--as a way of permitting distance all the more to suffuse the dream with light, soft, serene colouring. This makes it impossible for her to give any sort of valid interpretation to life; and as vision it never captures our imagination nor stirs our emotions; it is simply pretty." (2)

Ever since she began her career as a novelist Cather has possessed certain characteristics which have made her retreat from reality the natural and easy thing. Her method (3) and style (4) are both especially suited to aid in the development of asceticism. The emphasis she places on both the vivification of static nature (5) and primitive art as the symbol of the inborn spiritual idealism of the soul (6) gives but little importance to modern civilization. And in her novels, particularly the last four, the emphasis Cather places on the immaterial and spiritual causes us to believe that she senses but little of the real joy of living. Then the changing theme (7) and representative characters (8) offer proof of Cather's growing asceticism. Also her changing conception of the ideal existence as shown in the struggle of her characters to achieve

(1) VII, pp. 67-9; See also 19, pp. 537-8 (2) 12, p. 140
(3) See pp. 19-35 (4) See pp. 44-48 (5) See pp. 49-57
(6) See pp. 139-45 (7) See pp. 59-66 (8) See pp. 66-130

their ideal existence (1) further proves her growing asceticism.

As we read thoughtfully the titles of Cather's novels in the order in which she wrote them we find in them a record of her retreat from reality. "Alexander's Bridge," the title of her first novel, is lacking in significance just as is the novel itself. But "O Pioneers!" a title which Cather took from Walt Whitman's poem of the same name connotes much of reality. Then come "The Song of the Lark", "My Antonia" and "A Lost Lady," all titles suggestive of this life. Next is "The Professor's House" or the house of death, a title which is indicative of the author's lessening interest in the keen joy of living. "My Mortal Enemy", the title of Cather's eighth novel, suggests that the individual who is often his own mortal enemy must at last alone face at death this mortal enemy. "Death Comes For the Archbishop" as a title implies the importance of the after-life. And lastly is the title "Shadows on the Rock" which carries with it less of reality than do any of the others for there is nothing real to a shadow; this title states both Cather's mood and viewpoint.

> "Rock of Quebec is not only a stronghold on which many strange figures have for a little time cast a shadow in the sun; it is the curious endurance of a kind of culture narrow but definite. There another age persists." (2)

And Cather's belief that lasting happiness is not to be found in married life marks her as an ascetic. Jim Burden expressed Cather's reason for this disbelief as he mused over Anton Cuzak as the instrument of Antonia's special mission in

(1) See pp. 133-8
(2) 8, p. 216

life. Jim said, "I wondered whether the life that was right for one was ever right for two!" (1) In Dr. Archie, too, Cather shows her attitude toward marriage; Dr. Archie reflected, "The whole question of a young man's marrying has looked pretty grave to me for a long while. How have they the courage to keep on doing it? It depresses me now to buy wedding presents." (2) In her novels Cather without comment presents the married life of Bartley and Winifred Alexander, Marie and Frank Shabata, Dr. and Mrs. Archie, Claude and Enid Royce Wheeler, and Godfrey and Lilian St. Peter as proof of her disbelief in the true and lasting happiness of married life. And in her last two novels the main characters are either unmarried or have become widowers.

Little has Cather cared what present day society thinks of her novels; Prof. St. Peter's attitude toward his writings reminds us very much of Cather's own attitude toward her novels.

> "When the whole plan of his narrative was coming clearer and clearer all the time, when he could feel his hand growing easier with his material, when all the foolish conventions about that kind of writing were falling away and his relation with his work was becoming every day more simple, natural, and happy--he cared as little as the Spanish Adventurers themselves what Professor So-and-So thought about them." (3)

1.

Inconsequentiality of the Flesh

In order to make plain the growing asceticism of Cather, the writer in this section discusses the ascetic characters of her novels who are representative characters as well. The ascetic characters first to be discussed are those who simply believed in the inconsequentiality of the flesh not its mortification.

(1) IV, p. 413
(2) III, p. 398
(3) VII, pp. 32-3

Although in "One of Ours" asceticism is not the dominant note there are two characters who may be described as ascetic. Mrs. Wheeler who had been a schoolteacher before her marriage was a very quiet little woman. "She accepted everything about her husband as a part of his rugged masculinity, and of that she was proud in her quiet way." (1) Except for contacts with her family Mrs. Wheeler dwelt in a spiritual world where everything was orderly and peaceful. Her very fingers arched back at the joints as if they too were shrinking from contacts. (2) Claude often liked to look at her hands which were sensitive hands yet seemed to have nothing to do with sense, rather they seemed more like the groping fingers of a spirit.

So real to her was her spiritual world that Mrs. Wheeler never felt disappointments for herself; but because he was different she always felt keenly Claude's disappointments. That evening when Mr. Wheeler announced that Claude was to manage the home farm instead of returning to college Mrs. Wheeler had to leave the sitting room, for she alone understood how much Claude had planned on returning to college in the fall. As she sat with Mahailey in the kitchen Mrs. Wheeler suffered with Claude.

> "Her husband's careless decisions did not disconcert her. If he declared that he would not plant a garden at all this year, she made no protest. It was Mahailey who grumbled. If he felt like eating roast beef and went out and killed a steer, she did the best she could to take care of the meat, and if some of it spoiled she tried not to worry. When she was not lost in religious meditation, she was likely to be thinking about some one of the old books she read over and over. Her personal life was so far removed from the scene of her daily activities that rash and

(1) V, p. 27
(2) V, p. 256

violent men could not break in upon it. But where Claude was concerned she lived on another plane--dropped into the lower air, tainted with human breath and pulsating with poor, blind, passionate human feelings.

"It had always been so. And now, as she grew older, and her flesh had almost ceased to be concerned with pain or pleasure, like the wasted wax images in old churches, it still vibrated with his feelings and became quick again for him. His chagrins shrivelled her. When he was hurt and suffered silently, something ached in her. On the other hand, when he was happy, a wave of physical contentment went through her." (1)

In a way the World War and Claude's enlistment in it made Mrs. Wheeler sense the present. The use of submarines and airplanes was indicative of progress to her. She herself said, "I feel as if my sight couldn't bear the glory that beats upon it. It seems as if we would have to be born with new faculties, to comprehend what is going on in the air and under the sea."(2) Later Claude's very death brought comfort to her, for hadn't he died before he had been disillusioned? (3)

Another character in "One of Ours" who is ascetic but in a different way, is Enid Royce. Before her marriage to Claude Wheeler, Enid had held herself aloof from most of the Frankfort young people; but she had known and liked Gladys Farmer who unlike her possessed a passionate heart. Enid's older sister, Carrie, had gone as a missionary to China where Enid herself wanted to be. Yet she contented herself at home by becoming a very zealous and untiring worker for her church and prohibition. She did nothing important without first consulting Brother Weldon, in fact she consulted him before marrying Claude. Then

(1) V, pp. 68-9
(2) V, p. 257
(3) See p. 149

Brother Weldon told her that she, as a devout daughter of the church should marry Claude to reclaim him for the church. (1)

For Claude Enid had no passionate love, yet in her cold way she cared for him. Before their marriage Claude divined this lack of emotion in her, but then he felt that marriage would change it all; however it didn't. On the first night after their marriage Enid said to Claude in a commonplace tone of voice as she stood in the doorway of their stateroom,

> "Would you mind getting a berth out in the car tonight? The porter says they are not all taken. I'm not feeling very well. I think the dressing on the chicken salad must have been too rich." (2)

Claude didn't get a berth, but he did spend the night in the smoker and the next morning when Enid asked him if he ever lost things on the train, "He replied guardedly, not looking up as he snapped the catch on his bag, 'Sometimes.'" (3)

Enid kept the little house that Claude had ready for her spotless, but she didn't make of it a home. She saw that her husband was well clothed and fed and that was all. She did not want children, in fact she wanted to devote her life to the church and to such causes as prohibition. Her sister Carrie's illness in China gave Enid an excuse to leave Claude and go to her sister. Once having made up her mind to go, there was no turning her for she never questioned the rightness of her own decisions. (4)

After her departure for China Enid is mentioned but once or twice, and then only casually, in the two hundred odd remaining

(1) See V, p. 180 (2) V, p. 195
(3) V, p. 198 (4) V, p. 219

pages of the book. Just as completely did she depart from Claude's life.

In "My Mortal Enemy" there was nothing of the ascetic in the young Myra Henshawe and but little in the old Myra. Yet the very fact that she with her husband spent her last years far away from all her friends and relatives in a cheap boarding-house proved that there was something of the ascetic in her. Myra in speaking to Nellie said:

> "Now wasn't it clever of you to find us? And we so safely hidden--in earth, like a pair of old foxes!--I couldn't think of any old friends that weren't better away, for one reason or another, while we are in temporary eclipse. I gain strength faster if I haven't people on my mind." (1)

And too, Myra's desire to die alone facing the sunrise, and the actual fulfilment of that desire are further proof that there was something of the ascetic in her. (2)

In "Death Comes for the Archbishop" Fathers Latour and Vaillant are representative of the missionary priests who did so very much good among the Indians, Mexicans, and early white settlers of our West and Southwest. As Cather created these two characters she had in mind Fr. Lamey who was the first bishop of New Mexico and Fr. Machiboeuf. Cather herself says this of these two principal characters:

> "Many of the incidents are wholly imaginary, yet they are all <u>in the spirit of the two principal characters</u>, I think, and a great many of the incidents are narrated pretty much as they occurred; I have received a number of letters from very old priests who worked under these two missionaries, and they generously <u>insist that their memory of them is exactly identical with my conception of them</u>." (3)

(1) VIII, pp. 76-77 (2) See pp. 55, 104
(3) D, pp. 339-40

While both fathers were ascetic to a certain degree they did not believe in the mortification of the flesh. To them--and to Fr. Latour particularly--the only reality of life was Jesus' Presence and their only real passion was His passion. Like the members of the schools of early Greek philosophy which we have already referred to they believed in strengthening the body so that it might the better serve the mind and the spirit. Henry Van Dyke thus expresses their asceticism:

> "They are seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly; but they do not think that their chance of getting there will be improved by making this earthly pilgrimage as miserable as possible for themselves and for their fellowmen." (1)

Believing that there was a higher trust than the family trust both as young priests in France had run away to become missionaries in the New World. (2) Both were very devout and believed implicitly in the doctrines of their church. As far as we know these two priests, neither of them ever had the slightest inclination to do a physical or a spiritual wrong. Very beautifully does Fr. Vaillant summarize their life work.

> "But it has not been so bad Jean? We have done the things we used to plan to do, long ago, when we were Seminarians,--at least some of them. To fulfil the dreams of one's youth; that is the best that can happen to a man. No worldly success can take the place of that." (3)

Father Latour who became Archbishop of New Mexico was a scholarly man with a deep spiritual nature. Seemingly he was unfitted for his work in the New World; but his youthful determination to help strengthen and spread the Catholic faith and its principles in the New World ripened into a genuine love

(1) D, p. 354 (2) IX, p. 204
(3) IX, p. 263-4

for our Southwest and its people. Even after he had spent years in New Mexico Latour had periods of coldness and doubt when he felt that he had failed in his chosen work and that he should have become a professor in a French college. One night he felt so keenly this sense of failure that his bed became to him a bed of thorns. He arose, dressed quickly and went to his cold church; in the doorway of the sacristy he found an old Mexican, Sada, who was a slave in an American family. This was Sada's first visit to her church in years for her mistress had forbidden her to enter it. As Fr. Latour administered the sacrament to Sada and later talked with her his sense of failure vanished, "the peace without seemed all one with the peace in his own soul." (1)

One secret of Fr. Latour's success in dealing with the Indians, Mexicans, Americans, and native priests was that, as Jacinto said, he put on a false face to none. (2) Fr. Latour's one recreation was his garden which he had laid out a few years after coming to Santa Fe. All the new priests whom he instructed he urged to plant gardens. Often he half-humorously quoted Pascal saying that man was lost and saved in a garden. (3)

Father Latour's friendship with Fr. Vaillant which had begun in France during their seminary days was life long. The two men were very different, but each derived both physical and spiritual pleasure and help from the presence of the other. At times Fr. Latour felt keenly his inability to form new ties as did Fr. Vaillant. However the only form of jealousy he ever

(1) IX, pp. 211-220
(2) IX, p. 94
(3) See IX, p. 200-01; p. 267-68; and this paper, p. 55

allowed himself was that which wanted to keep Fr. Vaillant with him in Santa Fe; only once or twice did he yield to this. When Fr. Vaillant was about to start for Pikes Peak the Bishop was sad.

> "As a Bishop he could only approve Fr. Vaillant's eagerness to be gone, and the enthusiasm with which he turned to hardships of a new kind. But as a man, he was a little hurt that his old comrade should leave him without one regret. He seemed to know, as if it had been revealed to him, that this was a final break; that their lives would part here, and that they would never work together again. The bustle of preparation in his own house was painful to him, and he was glad to be abroad among the parishes." (1)

At length after an evening discussion of miracles Fr. Vaillant realized Fr. Latour's sense of loneliness. (2) The next day when Fr. Latour insisted that Fr. Joseph take not only his own mule with him but his, Fr. Latour's, as well, Fr. Joseph allowed himself to show real emotion. Fr. Latour's simple statement about the two mules' affection for each other reveals so much of his affection for Fr. Vaillant.

> "But if you take Contento I will ask you to take Angelica as well. They have a great affection for each other; why separate them indefinitely? One could not explain to them. <u>They have worked long together</u>." (3)

To this Fr. Vaillant made no reply but Fr. Latour saw a drop of water splash upon the violet script of Fr. Vaillant's letter to his sister. Then Fr. Latour quickly left the room. (4)

On the following day Fr. Vaillant left Santa Fe. As Fr. Latour sadly returned from seeing him off, he thought how different his life would be if he were a parish priest in France

(1) IX, p. 253
(2) See p. 154-5
(3) IX, p. 256
(4) See p. 47

where his nephews and nieces could come to him. But when he reached his study his feeling of sadness left him.

> "But when he entered his study, he seemed to come back to reality, to the sense of a Presence awaiting him. The curtain of the arched doorway had scarcely fallen behind him when that feeling of personal loneliness was gone, and a sense of loss was replaced by a sense of restoration. He sat down before his desk, deep in reflection. It was just this solitariness of love in which a priest's life could be like his Master's. It was not a solitude of atrophy, of negation, but of perpetual flowering. A life need not be cold, or devoid of grace in the worldly sense, if it were filled by Her who was all the graces.---The nursery tale could not vie with Her in simplicity, the wisest theologians could not match Her in profundity." (1)

After Fr. Vaillant's departure for Pikes Peak Fr. Latour planned more and more for his cathedral. His few friends of the country-- the Olivares, Kit Carson, Eusabio--for whom he had real affection, were either dead or far away. But the site of his cathedral-to-be was near him. With the aid of a French architect, Molny, Fr. Latour designed and had built a beautiful but simple cathedral which was not like the hideous ones everywhere springing up in the South West. (2) How he loved that Cathedral which in a way took Fr. Vaillant's place in his life and which later was to be a continuation of his own life.

For years Fr. Latour had dreamed of spending his last days in France but as he grew older he wanted to live and die in New Mexico where every morning he awoke a young man.

> "His first consciousness was a sense of the light dry wind blowing in through the windows;--- a wind that made one's body feel light and one's heart cry 'Today, today' like a childs.
> ---

(1) IX, pp. 257-8
(2) IX, p. 272

"He did not know just when it had become so necessary to him but he had come back to die in exile for the sake of it. Something soft and wild and free, something that whispered to the ear on the pillow, lightened the heart, softly, softly picked the lock, slid the bolts, and released the prisoned spirit of man into the wind, into the blue and gold, into the morning, into the morning!" (1)

So Fr. Latour spent his last days in Santa Fe in his old study coming in there from his country home to die. Ever an orderly man he arranged a routine for his last days which Bernard and Magdalena helped him to carry out. Much of his time he spent in retrospection, there was scarcely an event in his life which he did not relive. (2) His memories had no perspective. "He sat in the middle of his own consciousness; none of his former states of mind were lost or outgrown. They were all within reach of his hand, and all comprehensible." (3) He once told Bernard that he should die not of a cold but of having lived,(4) and how true that was. Archbishop Latour died toward the close of day; although his body was in the bed he was back in the green fields of his native mountains putting courage into the fainting heart of the boy Joseph Vaillant.

"When the Cathedral bell tolled just after dark, the Mexican population of Santa Fe fell upon their knees, all American Catholics as well. Many others who did not kneel prayed in their hearts. ----The next morning the old Archbishop lay before the high altar in the church he had built." (5)

So Fr. Latour became a memory and an ideal to the people of New Mexico; and the symbol of his having lived was the Cathedral just as he had wanted it to be.

Father Joseph Vaillant, that man of inconsistencies (6)

(1) IX, pp. 276-7 (2) See p. 34 (3) IX, p. 293
(4) IX, p. 270 (5) IX, p. 303 (6) IX, p. 177

was a typical parish priest beloved of his people. Cather says that a stranger on meeting him first decided that the Lord had made few uglier men. She goes on to say that his countenance had little to recommend it but kindliness and vivacity, and that there was nothing in the outer case of the man to suggest the fierceness and fortitude and fire within. Very quickly everyone with whom he came in contact recognized his power and loved Fr. Vaillant--homely, real, persistent, with the driving power of a dozen men in his poorly built body. (1) As a boy he had been very frail, but years in the new country had strengthened his body so that at the time of our story he was called tromp mort.

How Father Joseph loved people! In truth he could not be happy for long without human intercourse. (2) Yet he was always willing to move to a new place when so directed. "It was the discipline of his life to break ties; to say farewell and move on into the unknown." (3) As he himself said speaking about his departure for Pike's Peak, "Whenever God wills. I am ready." (4) And wherever he went people liked and loved Father Joseph and his church. Fr. Latour realized this as the following paragraph shows.

> "'Blanchet' (Fr. Latour's name for Fr. Vaillant) said the Bishop rising, 'you are a better man than I. You have been a greater harvester of souls, without pride and shame--and I am always a little cold--un pedant, as you used to say. If hereafter we have stars in our crowns, yours will be a constellation.'" (5)

For these people whom he loved so well he was willing to beg anything of anybody, this often embarrassed Fr. Latour.

(1) See IX, p. 37 (2) See IX, pp. 229-30
(3) IX, p. 249 (4) IX, p. 263
(5) IX, p. 264

Father Joseph had little of his own beside his mule Contento. (1) Of all people Fr. Vaillant loved best Fr. Latour and his sister Philomine who was Mother Superior in a convent in Riom.

Not only did Fr. Joseph believe in the power of God as a controlling force in the lives of men, but also did he believe in miracles. (2) This childlike belief, which Fr. Latour did not share, was somewhat puzzling to him. But then the Bishop never could understand the contradictions of Fr. Vaillant's nature, he simply accepted them. In spite of his deep spirituality Fr. Vaillant was passionately attached to many things of the flesh. He dearly liked good eating and drinking, but he never complained about the hardness and scantiness of the fare on long missionary journeys. (3) At Pikes Peak he became a promoter. While he himself was very poor he began buying up great tracts of land for the Church. Of course to do this he had to borrow money from banks at a ruinous rate of interest. Finally he formed a land company and went to France to float bonds. Strange as it may seem Fr. Joseph had a deep love for music; he himself had a pleasing tenor voice, true though not strong. (4) This statement made by Cather is very true:

> "Nothing one could say of Fr. Vaillant explained him. The man was much greater than the sum of his qualities. He added a glow to whatever kind of human society he was dropped down into. A Navajo hogan, some abjectly poor little huddle of Mexican huts, or a company of Monsignori and Cardinals at Rome--it was all the same." (5)

Father Joseph Vaillant's death was just as in keeping with

(1) See IX, pp. 228, 260-3 (2) See pp. 154-5
(3) See IX, p. 228 (4) IX, p. 177
(5) IX, p. 230

his life as was Father Latour's. He died in the harness, as the expression is; and his funeral Fr. Latour always liked to remember as a recognition. This funeral was held in a canvass tent for there was not a building in all the Far West large enough to hold the crowds that came to pay this last act of reverence to the Bishop of Denver, for Fr. Vaillant was at the time of his death Bishop. The arrival of the dying Fr. Rivardy at the funeral where he sat with his forehead resting against the edge of the coffin, was but one more "instance of the extraordinary personal devotion that Fr. Joseph had so often aroused and retained so long, in red men and yellow men and white." (1)

Cather in "Shadows on the Rock" speaks of the Ursulines and Hospitalieres as being the happiest people in Quebec because they lived in the world of the mind.

> "The Ursulines and the Hospitalieres, indeed, were scarcely exiles. When they came across the Atlantic, they brought their family with them, their kindred, their closest friends. In whatever little wooden vessel they had laboured across the sea, they carried all; they brought to Canada the Holy Family, the saints and martyrs, the glorious company of the Apostles, the heavenly host.
>
> "---They had no hours of nostalgia, for they were quite as near the realities of their lives in Quebec as in Dieppe or Tours. They were still in their accustomed place in the world of the mind (which for each of us is the only world) and they had the same well-ordered universe about them. There was sin, of course, and there was punishment after death; but there was always hope, even for the most depraved; and for those who died repentant, the Sister's prayers could do much,--no one might say how much.
>
> "So the nuns were always cheerful, never lugubrious. When, on parting from a stranger a Sister said pleasantly: 'I hope we shall meet in

(1) IX, p. 292

heaven' that meant nothing doleful,--it meant a happy appointment, for tomorrow, perhaps!" (1)

2.

Mortification of the Flesh

Now we come to the discussion of those ascetic characters of Cather's novels who did believe in the mortification of the flesh. In "Death Comes for the Archbishop" there is a character or two who believed in the mortification of the flesh. Such a character was Trinidad Lucero who during each Passion Week allowed his body to be scourged and stuck full of cactus spines. Once he even allowed himself to be crucified. (2)

In "Shadows on the Rock" Bishop de Laval and Jeanne Le Ber both lived ascetic lives, however the former did mingle with people. Bishop de Laval, or the old Bishop as he was called by the people of Quebec, was one who believed in mortifying the flesh so that the spirit might grow strong. Still he did not live to himself; he was revered and respected by all the people much more than was Bishop de Saint-Vallier whom he himself had selected to be his successor. In poor and small rooms in the Priest's House of his Seminary, the old Bishop "lived in naked poverty." He got along with but little heat and ate only the plainest of foods. "Every morning he got up at four o'clock, dressed without a fire, went with his lantern into the church and rang the bell for early mass for the working people." (3) Not even bad ulcers on his leg could keep him from doing this or from visiting his people for he was a good shepherd to his

(1) X, pp. 96-98
(2) See IX, pp. 149, 155-6
(3) X, p. 74

flock. Surely he had so subjected his flesh to his spirit and mind that at seventy-four years of age he could feel that his will had established the Catholic Church in Canada. But he still had one thorn in the flesh and that was the young Bishop who was of the world--the Epilogue portrays this young Bishop as a changed man. Bishop de Laval commanded the admiration of the people as the new Bishop with all his pomp could not. "One believed in his consecration, in some special authority won from fasting and penances and prayer; it was in his face, in his shoulders, it was he." (1)

Bishop de Laval once said when speaking of Jeanne Le Ber the recluse, "All the sinners of Ville-Marie may yet be saved by the prayers of that devoted girl." (2) As a child Jeanne, who was the only daughter of the richest merchant of Montreal, had been placed in the Ursuline convent at Quebec to receive her education. In those days she was never melancholy, but warm and ardent, like her complexion; gracious in her manner, and not at all shy." (3) Yet even then there was something reserved and guarded underneath this pleasing exterior. After she had completed her studies at the convent she returned home and was introduced to society. Then Jeanne wore the fine clothes her father gave her just to please him; but always when she wore a gay dress, underneath it next to her tender skin she wore a little haircloth shirt. Every night she used to pray kneeling beside the window of her room and watching the spot of light made by the silver lamp hanging before the Blessed Sacra-

(1) X, p. 231 (2) X, p. 175
(3) X, p. 130

ment in the church. To herself she often whispered, "I will be that lamp; that shall be my life." (1) Soon M. Le Ber announced Jeanne's dowry and there were many aspirants for her hand. Jeanne begged to be allowed to enter a convent, for to her the only real world was that inside the walls of a convent. Her parents opposed her in this so she decided to imitate the domestic retreat of Sainte Catherine of Siena.

Thus at seventeen she took the vow of chastity for five years, and her room in her father's house became her cell. There she preserved the absolute solitariness of a hermit, never even speaking with her parents. In fact, they never saw her face nor had speech with her after the day on which she first made her vow. At the end of five years she renewed her vow of seclusion for another five years. During this last five years her mother on her death-bed sent for Jeanne to come to her to give her the kiss of farewell. But Jeanne refused to go to her saying,"Tell her I am praying for her, night and day." (2) Before the last five years were over she was able to do that which she had long desired to do; she gave her dowry money to build a chapel for the Sisters of the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin, and herself took the final vows. From that time on she was known as the recluse of Ville-Marie.

In her cell behind the high altar of the Chapel Jeanne spent all her time.

> "The cell indeed was not one room, but three, one above another, and within them the solitaire carried on an unvarying routine of life. In the basement cubicle was the grille through which she

(1) X, p. 131
(2) X, p. 133

> spoke to her confessor, and by means of which she was actually present at mass and vespers, though unseen. There, through a little window, her meager food was handed to her. The room above was her sleeping chamber, constructed by the most careful measurements for one purpose; her narrow bed against the wall was directly behind the high altar, and her pillow, when she slept, was only a few inches from the Blessed Sacrament on the other side of the partition. The upper cell was her atelier, and there she made and embroidered beautiful altar-cloths and vestments.--- When her eyes were tired, or when the day was too dark for embroidering, she spun yarn and knitted stockings for the poor. In her workroom there was a small iron stove with a heap of faggots, and in the most severe cold of winter the recluse lit a little fire, not for bodily comfort, but because her fingers became stiff with the cold and lost their cunning,--indeed, there were sometimes days on which they would actually have frozen at their task." (1)

Every night of the year at midnight Jeanne went into the church to pray for an hour before the high altar. And so Jeanne's life went on for years. She bore the cold of winter without complaining--she allowed herself only one coverlid at night. And no more did she complain during the summer when the heat lay heavy in her chamber with its one small window; she even refused to follow her confessor's advice and walk in the cloister garden for an hour each day. (2)

Pierre Charron who had been the boyhood lover of Jeanne was very bitter over her life of seclusion. Once he talked with her after she had taken her vows for the first time. Then she bade him farewell saying that she should pray for him every day as long as she lived. Years later one night Pierre hid himself in the church so that once more he might see Jeanne Le Ber and hear her voice. At midnight he saw the iron grille of her cell open and Jeanne come in wearing a grey gown,

(1) X, p. 134-5
(2) See X, pp. 134-6

on her head was a black scarf but no veil. Now we will quote Pierre's own description of that which followed.

> "The candle shone up into her face. It was like a stone face; it had been through every sorrow---She put down her candle and went toward the high altar. She walked very slowly, with great dignity. At first she prayed aloud, but I scarcely understood her. My mind was confused; her voice was so changed,--hoarse, hollow, with the sound of despair in it. Why is she unhappy, I ask you? She is, I know it! When she prayed in silence, such sighs broke from her. And once a groan, such as I have never heard; such despair--such resignation and despair!-------
>
> "After she had bowed herself for the last time, she took up her candle and walked toward that door, standing open. I lost my head and betrayed myself. I was well hidden, but she heard me sob.
>
> "She was not startled. She stood still, with her hand on the latch of the grille, and turned her head, half-facing me. After a moment she spoke.
>
> "'Poor sinner,' she said, 'poor sinner whoever you are, may God have mercy upon you! I will pray for you. And do you pray for me also.'
>
> "She walked on and shut the grille behind her." (1)

After that Pierre left the church feeling utterly miserable and bitter toward the Sisters who had helped Jeanne to become an ascetic.

But Jeanne Le Ber's ascetic life did not effect many as it did Pierre. Most people liked to hear of her devotion to the church as did Cecile. The story of two angels visiting her to mend her broken spinning wheel was not only believed but also loved by most of the people of that section of Canada. In these words does Cather speak of the story:

> "Wherever it went, it brought pleasure, as if the recluse herself had sent to all those families

(1) X, p. 182-3

> whom she did not know some living beauty,-- a blooming rose-tree, or a shapely fruit-tree in fruit. Indeed she sent them an incomparable gift. (1)

It seems to the writer that the story of the life of Jeanne Le Ber marks the climax of Cather's retreat from reality. Yes, Jeanne is a minor character of the novel; but the deep reverence and respect which Cecile Auclair, the main character of "Shadows on the Rock," shows for her reflect Cather's own attitude toward such a life.

(1) X, pp. 136-7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We discussed in the introduction some of the terms used in modern literary criticism so that their meaning might not be puzzling as they appear in this thesis.

In Chapter I we stated that Cather has an aesthetic purpose in keeping herself out of her novels. Then we studied all of Cather's full length novels to discover whether or not the methods used in them proved her innate aversion from reality. In them all we found that she made marked use of indirect narrative method. As the stories of "My Antonia" and "My Mortal Enemy" were told in the first person by Jim Burden and Nellie Birdseye respectively the author seems far removed from them. Not one of these ten novels is lacking in reminiscent narrative. And in them there are but very few big scenes in which character and emotion come to a crisis in physical action. So we conclude that Cather reveals her innate aversion from reality through method.

Cather's aversion from reality through style was the subject of our study in the next chapter. So much is implied but not expressed in her novels that we called her style not chronicle style but the method of implication. Then because the sentences of the novels are short and composed of such carefully chosen and artistically arranged words we decided they couldn't possibly reflect the complexity of present day living. Hence we conclude that Cather too reveals her aversion from reality through style.

Chapter III offers proof of Cather's tendency to vivify

static nature. In her novels the prairie, trees, gardens, houses, the sun, Lake Michigan, the mesa, rivers and ships become almost human. This emphasis on the vivification of static nature makes the characters of the novels seem less real.

We divided Chapter IV into three parts. In the first part we stated that in general the theme of all Cather's novels is the living out of one's potentialities. Then we stated the theme which Cather has accepted for each of her novels. From the statement of these themes we find that the theme of the first six of the novels may be expressed as the struggle of the individual to live out his potentialities. In the first part of her next novel, "The Professor's House," the theme is the same, but in the end the individual, Godfrey St. Peter, yields to fate deciding to live without keen joy or suffering. In "My Mortal Enemy" there is but a brief half-hearted struggle on the part of the individual to live out her potentialities, then she submits to fate. And the theme of the last two novels is lacking in vitality for it is the submission of the individual without physical or moral struggle to that which fate or destiny may decree for him. In the second part of this chapter we studied the representative characters of the novels. In the first six the representative characters, for the most part, strive to actually live because they possess a love of the present reality of life. Yet, in these novels there is an occasional character who seems not in the least real. In the seventh of the novels, "The Professor's House," Godfrey St.

Peter, then beyond middle age, decides after much introspective thinking that death is the Truth and that he can live without keen joy or passionate griefs; thus he becomes the prototype of the representative characters of the next three novels. Myra, the representative character of "My Mortal Enemy" would have loved the present reality of life had she possessed wealth, but she didn't; so she, calling death her friend, became in her way an ascetic dependent on the rites of her church for her only comfort. The representative characters of the last two novels have no real interest in the present reality of life; their interest is in the world of the mind or the spiritual world. To them the after-life is more real than the present life. Practically all the characters of Cather's novels are three dimensional; but we emphasized the inner life of Jim Burden, Claude Wheeler, Niel Herbert and Godfrey St. Peter. And in the third part of the chapter we stressed the fact that Cather prefers to give the reader a feeling that the events of her novels are remote from both him and the author. So the changing themes, the changing representative characters, and the remoteness of event give evidence that by choice Cather has retreated from reality.

Chapter V deals with Cather's changing conception of the ideal existence. The ideal existence in the first six novels is one reached or approached in this life after the character has been victorious in his struggle with the prairie, himself or a not understanding society. In "The Professor's House,"

the seventh novel, Godfrey St. Peter finds the ideal existence in an attitude of mind. And for Myra Henshawe in "My Mortal Enemy" the ideal existence is not to be reached in this life but in the life-to-come. In the last two novels the ideal existence is to be found without any moral struggle in the world of the mind or the spiritual world.

In Chapter VI, our study of Cather's novels revealed the fact that in them her belief in primitive art as a symbol of the spiritual idealism symbolic of the soul is set forth. Particularly do the following illustrate this: Thea's discovery, as she studied the potsherds of the ancient Cliff-Dwellers, that art is but an effort to imprison for a moment the shining elusive element which is life itself; Tom Outland's description of the round tower of the Cliff-Dwellers village; and Fr. Latour's reflections on the Acoma Rock. This emphasis on primitive art as a true manifestation of the soul's spiritual longings proves that Cather is far removed from the present reality of life.

Through the emphasis placed by Cather on the immaterial and spiritual in all her novels--and particularly in the last two--we decided in Chapter VII that she does not possess a love of the present reality of life. Surely no writer who is a thorough realist could make legends, miracles, death, and references to the after-life as important as does Cather.

In Chapter VIII we grouped together those things which contribute to Cather's essential asceticism. And then we discussed seven characters, whose very lives seem symbolic of the

development of Cather's asceticism.

To the writer Cather's retreat from reality is but the natural result of the development of her essential asceticism. This retreat from reality tacitly reveals Cather's belief that modern life with all its complexities is not what it should be. Her method and style as well as her belief that art is religion and her tendency to vivify static nature made it easy for Cather the artist to retreat from reality. And the very fact that she always has been more a psychorealist than a realist aided in this change. The gradually changing themes and representative characters of Cather's novels show very plainly that she has come not to care for the present reality of life.

In conclusion the writer expresses a hope that this thesis in revealing the development of Cather's asceticism clarifies the meaning of some of the new terms of literary criticism and so is itself a small contribution to literary criticism.

APPENDIX A

BRIEF NOTES ON WILLA CATHER'S NOVELS

Willa Cather's first published book was a collection of poems, "April Twilights," 1903. But in the year 1902 a short story by her, "The Professor's Commencement," had appeared in the New England Magazine. S. S. McClure published Cather's collection of short stories "The Troll Garden" in 1905. After that for six years her only publications were twenty contributions to magazines, of those fourteen were poems.

In 1912 Cather's first novel, "Alexander's Bridge", came out as "Alexander's Masquerade" in McClures Magazine. This novel although it reflects the author's kindness and humanity is not typical of Cather's novels, she was too concerned over trying to write well, to write a truly great novel. And then the material she used in this novel was not that with which she was familiar. Cather herself says it is hard for an inexperienced writer to distinguish between his own material and that which he would like to make his own. She continues: "He understands, of course, that he must know a great deal about life, but he thinks this knowledge is something he can get by going out to look for it, as one goes to the theater." (1)

Then in her next novel "O Pioneers!" published in 1913, Cather proceeded to follow Sarah Orne Jewett's advice which was to write about <u>her own</u> country. The title itself is suggestive of the reality of life because of Walt Whitman's poem of the same name. This novel lacks not only the unity of time and place but also the unity of treatment and subject. But Rene Rapin says, "It is an imperfect book, but a great book. Its

(1) I, a, p. VII

worst defects are redeemed by its fulness of life, its epic breadth, and its truth." (1)

Stuart Sherman speaks of her next novel, "The Song of the Lark" as Cather's most intimate book. That is very true for in that novel we find expression of very many of Cather's beliefs. Moreover Thea's struggle to become an operatic artist resembles Cather's own struggle to become a literary artist. In spite of the fact that the book reflects a Victorian attitude toward sex Stuart Sherman calls it a "magnificent piece of imaginative realism." (2) And Edward Everett Hale discovered in this novel "a sense of something less common than life: namely, art as it exists in life--a very curious and elusive thing but so beautiful when one gets it, that one forgets all else." (3)

In "My Antonia" published in 1918 Cather relives some of her girlhood days spent in Nebraska, hence the life portrayed in the book is actually seen at a distance. Antonia herself may have been a Bohemian servant girl who was kind to Cather when she was a child. But Alexander Porterfield says, "She gets sense, smell and spirit of Middle West into her prose." (4) The book shows Cather as an idealist as well as a realist. Surely "My Antonia" is in some respects an improvement over earlier novels for in it people are analyzed or explained scarcely at all. They are so clearly set before us that this is not necessary. (5) Yet Rene Rapin says that it "is inferior to "O Pioneers!" in warmth of passion, and to "The Song of the Lark" in variety of scope of interest and has the defects in

(1) C, p. 22 (2) 6, p. 43 (3) 17, p. 215
(4) B, p. 6 (5) 13, pp. 331-2

structure of both." (1)

"One of Ours," Cather's fifth novel, was published in 1922. Critics and the reading public hailed it at once as Cather's attempt to write a war novel. As such they said it was a miserable failure and that Cather should have continued to write of the prairie. But Cather had not intended to write a novel of the World War, rather in this novel she endeavored to present "one of ours" Claude Wheeler, in his struggle to find his place in life. Of course the whole novel is an implicit satire on the "wholesome atmosphere of American manners and manhood" as Stuart Sherman expresses it. (2) The verisimilitude of Books Four and Five is noteworthy. In fact the whole book is the best novel that Cather had written so far for it is perfectly focused.

"A Lost Lady," published in 1923, has been called by Alexander Porterfield, and Henry S. Canby Cather's most perfect novel. (3) Rene Rapin disagrees with these critics but at the same time he points out the good points of the book.

> "Not Willa Cather's most important book, nor her most perfect. (Mrs. Forrester is rather presented from the outside, than recreated from within, her story lacks the copiousness and intimacy of Claude Wheeler's or Thea Kronborg's.) "A Lost Lady" yet deserves high praise. It is an accomplished portrait, a masterpiece of concise narrative where every stroke tells, a dramatic moving story whose 'haunting loveliness lingers in the mind afterwards with the delicacy of music' and leaves behind a feeling of subtle pathos such as made Wordsworth exclaim:
>
> 'Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
> Of that which once was great is pass'd away.'" (4)

(1) C, p. 47 (2) See 6
(3) See B, p. 10; A, p. 235.
(4) C, p. 71

The writer accepts Rapins criticism as much more fair to the book than the criticism of the two men first mentioned. The Nebraskan background enables Cather to feel at home in writing the story and so make it true to life.

"The Professor's House" is, as Rene Rapin says, "a masterpiece of comprehension, selection and restraint, with an atmosphere all its own yet typically 'Willa Catherian' (typical of her later books) a tender, golden luminousness bathing landscape and man in the same autumnal pensiveness." (1) As a story this novel is not important but as a study of a man approaching old age it is noteworthy. The allegory, which Stuart Sherman suggests may be found in the novel, adds but little to our interest in the book. (2)

"My Mortal Enemy," published in 1926, is one of Cather's lesser books. As a novel it is inferior to "A Lost Lady" to which it is similar in fact, theme, and treatment. While the novel fails to make a lasting impression on the reader it fills him with a sense of maladjustment and frustration as he reads. Rene Rapin speaks of it as containing all the elements of a great book yet failing to become one. (3)

Cather received her idea for her next novel "Death Comes for the Archbishop," in 1912 during her first visit to the Southwest. She herself says that the longer she stayed in the Southwest the more she felt that the story of the Catholic church in that country was its most interesting story. To her the old mission churches, even those in ruins, seemed a direct

(1) C, p. 77 (2) See 6, p. 48
(3) See C, p. 79

expression of some very real and lively human feeling. (1) So as her tendency grew to select from among all the human emotions those which do not necessitate conflicts that are difficult to resolve, she wrote the unique book "Death Comes for the Archbishop" which was published in 1927. In a letter to the Commonweal which was printed in the November 23, 1927 issue Cather speaks thus of her book:

> "My book was a conjunction of the general and the particular, like most works of the imagination. I had all my life wanted to do something in the style of the legend, which is absolutely the reverse of dramatic treatment. Since I first saw the Puvis de Chavannes frescoes of the life of Ste. Genevieve in my student days, I have wished that I could do something a little like that in prose, something without accent---. In the Golden Legend the martyrdoms of the saints are no more dwelt on than the trivial incidents of their lives; it is as though all human experience measured against one supreme spiritual experience, were of about the same importance." (2)

While this book lacks much of the reality of her earlier novels it, with her next novel, "Shadows on the Rock," marks the climax in her struggle for the mastery of art and reveals a fine fidelity to mood.

"Shadows on the Rock" which is Cather's last novel, was published in 1931. The world of this novel is an idyllic one from which reality has been barred save when an allusion or a minor character makes the reader conscious of reality for a bit. In it the tempo of life is slowed down and stylized into that of a minuet. As an artistic piece of writing it ranks high because in it Cather's artistry is at its height. She in this novel achieves unity of time, place, and action. One critic speaks of

(1) See C, p. 82 (2) 11, p. 647

it as like an old ballad sung without accompaniment before the fire on a winter evening. (1) Before she wrote this book Cather spent a long time among the nuns and country people of Quebec, there she caught a kind of feeling about life and human fate which she admired. The title of the book states both her mood and viewpoint as she wrote. (2) The ending of this novel leaves the reader with a different feeling than do Cather's other novels.

Many are Cather's short stories that, from time to time, have appeared in magazines. But, because of the uncertainty of the exact dates of the writing of these stories the writer has not considered them in this thesis.

(1) 7, p. 198 (2) See p. 160

APPENDIX B

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